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Contemporary Indian Philosophers

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IN

MEMORY OF

LATE APARNA CHARAN RAY

AND

LATE AMBIKA CHARAN RAY

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

By Indian philosophy people generally mean the six ancient systems which, as regards originality and depth of insight, stand yet supreme. Subsequent Indian thinking has been, in the main, a commentary on these systems; and the only originality that can be claimed for later thinkers lies not in any new formulation but in the emphasis given by each and in the manner of exposition of the original truths. There is hardly a philosophical idea in the contemporary thinkers that cannot be traced to the perennial spring of ancient Indian philosophy.

But exposition and application have their value, and each thinker has his own angle of vision. Hence, is the importance of a study like this for the total understanding of a nation's mind in the sphere of values and the higher inclinations. Superficially looked at the philosophical endeavours of a nation may not seem to have any direct relation with the curve of its life. But such an attitude is indeed superficial. We cannot hope to understand modern India—nor ancient, eternal India—if we do not have some clean notion of "the riddle of this world" that the Indian people have 'posed' for themselves and the successive answers they have given.

The Contemporary Indian Philosophers have, as already said, interpreted the ancient wisdom in their own ways. Their approach to the fundamental issue

of life will have a bearing for the age when the confusion of values reigns supreme. That the interpreters have themselves been outstanding men, men who have lived the life they have thought or preached, adds to the effectiveness of the theories presented. In a sense, however, they are not theorists and philosophers at all, but their belief has largely moulded their lives as well as of those who have followed them. Their world-view had an undeniable influence as a practical guide to life, individual and collective, national and transcendental. A way of life so powerful and persistent—and so various—cannot be wished away by the impatience of 'modernism'.

It is not the aim of this monograph to give a critical or historical survey of contemporary Indian philosophy, a task that may conveniently be taken up by scholars in the field.

My treatment in this sketch book does not claim to be exhaustive or profound. I have chosen a few recent thinkers who, I believe, have made substantial contributions to our ways of thought and behaviour, and who have been credited with different schools of thought, which form prominent features of contemporary Indian thinking.

As in the past, in contemporary Indian thinking, philosophy and religion are intertwined. That is why I have presented the philosophical position of the different thinkers in the light of their religious convictions. It is necessary to remind the reader that the persons chosen for this booklet are all non-academic. Academic philosophers do not come within its scope

and some expected and illustrious names will be missed in its pages.

In this connexion I express my gratitude to my young friend and colleague, Shri Sisir Ghose, M.A., for his constant encouragement. The care with which he has gone through the manuscript is amazing. Indeed there are portions in the book which are more his than mine.

RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY

Raja Rammohun Roy was born in one of the darkest ages of Indian history and culture. The old dilapidated social structure had already cracked and was tumbling down. Religions and philosophies had become dull and insipid. All institutions—law, agriculture, trade, industry and family life—had been mildewed. The entire cultural life was a scene of ugly ruins and decadence. "Rammohun was born at a time when our country having lost its link with the inmost truths of its being, struggled under a crushing load of unreason, in abject slavery to circumstance. In social usage, in politics, in the realm of religion and art, we had entered the zone of uncreative habit, of decadent tradition, and ceased to exercise our humanity. In this dark gloom of India's degeneration Rammohun rose up, a luminous star in the firmament of India's history with prophetic purity of vision, and unconquerable heroism of soul."[1]

The Raja was born in 1772 of devout and orthodox Hindu parents. After his rudimentary instructions in a *Pathasala* Rammohun was sent to Patna to learn the Persian and Arabic languages. It was then, whilst studying the Koran in the original Arabic that he developed a hatred for Hindu idolatry. After his career

[1] *Rammohun Roy: The man and his work,* (Centenary Publicity Booklet No. 1) p. 3.

at Patna he undertook the famous journey to Tibet to study Buddhism. He protested vehemently against the idolatrous teachings of the Lamas and on one occasion was in danger of being killed by the infuriated conservative preachers of the forbidden land. After his sojourn in Tibet, he for some time settled down in Benares where he studied the sacred literature of the Hindus. His father died in 1803 and soon after he removed to Murshidabad from where he published the *Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhdin* or *A Gift to Monotheists*, "a work protesting against the idolatries and superstitions of all creeds and trying to lay a common foundation of Universal Religion in the doctrine of the unity of Godhead."[1]

Against all forms of idolatry no contemporary Indian philosopher has fought so hard and so earnestly as he, and with such obsessive zeal. All through his career as a religious reformer, he replied to several tracts that advocated the cause of idolatry and the intelligentsia was always over-whelmed by his profound knowledge of the Hindu scriptures and his great logical acumen. He takes up the question of idolatry again in the preface of his translation of the Ishopanishad. From the Vedas, Puranas and Tantras passages may be quoted that assert the existence of the plurality of gods and goddesses and prescribe the modes of their worship. But Rammohun would never interpret these statements in an idolatrous way. Rammohun points out to several other passages from those ancient Indian

[1] *Rammohun Roy: The man and his work*, (Centenary Publicity Booklet No. 1) p. 10.

philosophical works which tend to show that the earlier passages are to be taken in a merely figurative sense. He also argues: "It cannot be alleged in support of idolatry that although a knowledge of God is certainly above all things, still as it is impossible to acquire that knowledge, men should, of course, worship figured gods; for, had it been impossible to attain a knowledge of the Supreme Being, the Vedas and Puranas as well as Tantras, would not have instructed mankind to aim at such attainment; as it is not to be supposed that direction to acquire what is obviously unattainable could be given by the Shastra, or even by a man of common sense. Should the idolator say that the acquisition of a knowledge of God, although it is not impossible, is most difficult of comprehension, I will agree with him in that point; but infer from it, that we ought, therefore, the more to exert ourselves, to acquire that knowledge; but I highly lament to observe, that so far from endeavouring to make such an acquisition, the very proposal frequently excites his anger and displeasure."[1] Again it cannot be said that the adoration of the Supreme Being is only meant for the Sannyasins. From the 48th text of the third chapter of the Vedanta it is evident that the householder also is required to perform the worship of the Absolute, who is formless. The Raja definitely asserts by quoting a few texts [2] of the Vedas: "Adore God alone. None but the Supreme Being is to be wor-

[1] See *English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, p. 65. (Panini Office).

[2] See *A Second defence of the monotheistical system of the Vedas* (by Rammohun Roy).

shipped; nothing excepting Him should be adored by a wise man."[1]

In 1809 Rammohun was appointed as a Sheristadar at Rangpur. "It was in Rangpur that Rammohun first began to assemble his friends together for evening discussions on religious subjects, especially on the untenableness and absurdities of idolatry."[2] In the year 1815 he removed to Calcutta, where he settled down. He published a translation of the Vedanta and founded the Atmiya Sabha, an association for the dissemination of religious truths. Rammohun carried on extensive researches in Sanskrit literature and was much impressed by the sublimity of the monotheistic doctrines of the Upanishads. He published several translations of them to rouse his countrymen to a sense of the superiority of monotheism over other forms of religious worship. He was well versed in the six Darsanas and had a definite philosophical opinion about the Vedanta. As Vaedantin, he conceived the Supreme Being as Brahman but did not favour its abstract monism. On this point he differed from Sankara, the celebrated authority on the Vedanta. According to Sankara, the Supreme Reality or Brahman has no need of Jivas or finite individuals. Brahman is an abstract Essence. But according to the Raja, the Supreme Reality without the finite individuals is meaningless. Sankara did not deny the Saguna or personal aspect of Brahman. But Rammohun laid special emphasis on this Saguna aspect of the Absolute. In other

[1] *English Writings*, p. 109

[2] Miss S. D. Collet, *Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy*, p. 12 (1900).

words, it was the Vedantic doctrine of concrete monotheism which appealed to him. According to him, the world is valueless without God and God also cannot exist without the world. "Substance," asserts Rammohun, "is as much dependent on the possession of quality or qualities for its existence, as a quality on some substance. It is impossible even to imagine a substance divested of qualities."[1] This reminds us of the "Concrete Universal" of Hegel. What Hegel preached as the message of the Concrete Universal, Rammohun also believed but both developed their theories in utter unawareness of each other. In this respect, the Raja's views also bear close affinity with the teachings of Al-Quran. "It is true that the Quaranic conception of the Divinity is a concrete monism, and generally the acceptance of the import of 'tauhid' (oneness of God) implies a belief in a concrete Divinity as contradistinguished from an abstract Essence."[2]

According to the Raja, this Supreme Reality or Brahman is to be realized in Samadhi. Worship and meditation are necessary as means conducive to Samadhi. He lays considerable emphasis on worship. What is worship? "Worship implies the act of one with a view to please another; but when applied to the Supreme Being, it signifies a contemplation of his attributes."[3] To whom is worship due? "To the author and governor of the universe, which is incomprehen-

[1] *English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, p. 114 (Panini Office)
[2] *The father of modern India* (Rammohun Roy Centenary, 1933), p. 382. Article by Maulvi Wahed Husain.
[3] *English Writings*, p. 135.

sibly formed, and filled with an endless variety of men and things; in which, as shown by the zodiac, in a manner far more wonderful than the machinery of a watch, the sun, the moon, the planets and the stars perform their rapid courses; and which is fraught with animate and inanimate matter of various kinds, locomotive and immovable, of which there is not one particle but has its functions to perform."[1]

In the year 1820 Rammohun published a new book, *The Precepts of Jesus, the guide to peace and happiness.* It included only the moral and spiritual teachings of the four Gospels. This act of the Raja gave a rude shock to the sentiments of his countrymen, for the prejudice against Christianity was very great at the time. But Rammohun's genius would not leave what was the best in the Christian religion. About the book he writes: "This simple code of religion and morality is so admirably calculated to elevate man's ideas to high and liberal notions of God, who has equally subjected all living creatures, without distinction of caste, rank or wealth, to change, disappointment, pain and death, and has equally admitted all to be partakers of the bountiful mercies which he has lavished over nature, and is also so well fitted to regulate the conduct of the human race in the discharge of their various duties to themselves, and to society, that I cannot but hope the best effects from its promulgation in the present form."[2] In 1824 he also befriended a Unitarian Mission at Calcutta and attended unitarian services.

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, p. 485 (Published by the Panini Office).

To the question—why do you frequent a unitarian place of worship?—the Raja gave the following answer—"I do so because the prayers read, worship offered and sermons preached in the unitarian place of worship remind me of the infinitely wise Ruler of this infinite universe....because unitarians reject polytheism and idolatry under every sophistical modification....and because unitarians believe, profess and inculcate the doctrine of the divine unity—a doctrine which I find firmly maintained both by Christian Scriptures and by our most ancient writings commonly called the Vedas."[1]

Did the Raja, then, want to abolish all existing religions? No. What he really wanted to have was a theistic fraternity. "Not only did he include Hindu, Moslem and Christian Theists in one theistic fraternity as brothers in faith; he extended this fellowship and co-operation to those, who, by whatever name, would acknowledge some Principle of the universe, the need of meditation on that Principle as good, and the love and service of man as the guiding principle of the conduct of life. Buddhists and Jainas and believers in a Law of Nature, he would, therefore, acknowledge as not against the theistic fraternity, but with it."[2] The Raja believed that by such mutual contact each of the existing religions would grow into fuller and fuller perfection. Each will not merge into the other; each will flourish in its own way but all will tend to a universal theism. The different religions will be special embodiments of the common universal theism.

[1] *English Writings*, pp. 201-203.

[2] Centenary Booklet No. 1, p. 102. (Address by B. N. Seal).

In 1828 Rammohun started the Brahmo Sabha and in 1830 founded the Brahmo Samaj. The trust deed of the Samaj tells us that Rammohun organized it "for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the universe but not under, or by any other name, designation or title peculiarly used for, and applied to, any particular Being or Beings, by any man, or set of men, whatsoever."[1] Some other terms of the Trust are: "No graven image, statue or sculpture, carving, painting, portrait or the likeness of anything shall be admitted within the messuage, building, land, tenements, hereditaments and premises; and that no sacrifice, offering or oblation of any kind or thing, shall ever be permitted therein.........and that no sermon, preaching, discourse, prayer or hymn be delivered, made or used in such worship but such as have a tendency to the promotion of the contemplation of the Author and Preserver of the universe to the promotion of charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue and the strengthening the bonds of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds."

The Raja wished that the Brahmo Samaj should be the society of the true worshippers of the one God of all religions. In actual practice it was only a congregation of Hindu Theists. But this in no way affected the universalism which he realized in himself. A special feature of his universal theism was social reform. Rammohun fought bravely with the evils of caste system and the subjection of women. But for his

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

courageous persuasions one of the greatest evils of India, the practice of the Sutee, could not have been abolished.

The Raja died in 1833 at Bristol.

Rammohun inaugurated a new era in the history of Indian thought and culture. To-day he stands as an arch between mediaeval India and modern India, between faith and reason. He realised within himself by solitary sufferings the true spirit of universalism and his hope lay in binding all India in one unity of theistic fraternity. A champion of monotheism, a unifier, a social reformer, Rammohun believed in the equality and unity of men, in their common worship of the Supreme Being. He is the pathmaker for the new India.

MAHARSHI DEVENDRANATH TAGORE

Raja Rammohun Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj and meant it for a common place of worship by all theists. But in practice it was only the Hindu theists who clung to the church of Rammohun and it became virtually a Hindu theistic fraternity. But habits die hard and soon after the death of the Raja the church showed signs of decay and dissolution. Rammohun had fought bravely against all forms of idolatrous worship but strangely enough many of the members of his church were idolators at home.[1] Want of sincerity was obvious in a large section of the fraternity. Devendranath, when he entered the Samaj, realised its moribund state. "In attending the services of the Samaj, he found, as he himself mentions in his autobiography, that the doctrine of Rama's incarnation was being preached from the pulpit by Pandit Iswar Chandra Nyayaratna, the assistant of Pandit Ramchandra Vidyabagish, and also that old rule of excluding non-Brahmins from a side-room where the Vedas were being chanted was being adhered to. As his first act of reform, Devendranath entered his earnest protest against these practices and put an effectual check upon them."[2]

Rammohun did not found a religion. What he

[1] "The decline of the Samaj was visible in other directions also. There was no fraternity of fellow-believers. Most of those who attended the services were idolators at home." *History of the Brahmo Samaj* by Sivanath Shastri, p. 89. (Vol. I).
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

preached was theism in its purest form as divested from all dogmas and rituals. Pure theism made little or no appeal to the sentiments of the masses and only a few persons were genuinely baptized in the faith of Rammohun.

When Devendranath came to the Samaj he felt that a *cultus* had to be established. A mere congress with no definite dogmas, methods of worship and rituals would not perpetuate the spiritual teachings of Rammohun. So, on the ground prepared by the Raja he built up a religion more complete in details.

It is interesting to trace the course of events that led Devendranath to the Samaj. Devendranath was born of orthodox Hindu parents. His father Prince Dwarkanath Tagore lived in an environment of riches and luxury. The boy Devendranath found on all sides only pomp and pageantry. But a sudden change came upon him when he was only eighteen. It was a fullmoon night on the bank of the Ganges. His grandmother was dying and a few persons were singing the glory of the Almighty. A solemn air prevailed and it suddenly occurred to Devendranath that all riches were unreal and all pomp meaningless. Aversion to riches seized his mind and he felt a peculiar joy which only mystics feel. This sudden experience was a turning-point in his life. But for this experience, who knows, he might have always remained in the mist of material joy and pleasure. But God had ordained that he must do something sublime and hence came the moral experience.[1]

[1] See *Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath*, (in Bengali) 1st Chapter. (Edited by Satis Chandra Chakravartty)

This experience kindled in Devendranath a passion for knowing the Almighty or ultimate Reality. He began to ask the pundits, who knew the intricacies of the Hindu lore, the eternal metaphysical conundrums. But the answers he received did not satisfy him. In his search he went through the works of western philosophers. He made a serious study of the philosophies of John Locke, David Hume, Gassendi, Sir Robert Boyle and others but was equally disappointed. His mind was in a whirl and for a time he was miserable. He began to ask himself the question—Is it the destiny of human beings only to serve under the relentless determinism of Nature? While groping in this darkness of mind, one day by sheer reflection he came to the conclusion that the knowledge of the object implies the knowledge of the subject. It is true, through the sense organs we get knowledge of objects, but along with object-knowledge do we not know the subject as a thinker and perceiver?[1] He also realized that the universe owes its existence to the benevolent will of One Infinite Who is without any form. It was from the Isopanishad, from one of its slokas, that his heart got what it wanted to have.[2] He found the key to all secrets in the truth of that sloka—Cover the universe by God and everything becomes good—. The universe owes its existence to the will of God. The will of God is benevolent. If it were not so, God would have been a mischievous Being, a Satan.

[1] See *Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranath*, (in Bengali) 4th Chapter. (Edited by Satis Chandra Chakravartty).

[2] ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत् किंच जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः मा गृधः कस्य स्विद् धनम् ॥

Devendranath is an optimist and considers the universe to be good in all respects. According to him, the universe is continually being transformed into ever greater beauty and goodness.[1]

The certainty of his belief calmed his heart. With great zeal he studied the Upanishads under the guidance of eminent Sanskrit scholars. The inner truth of Indian philosophies were gradually revealed to him. But again after a time Devendranath became restless, but this time it was only for devising means for the spread of the truth which he had learnt from the Upanishads. Accordingly, he founded in 1839 the Tatvabodhini Sabha to disseminate truths about the ultimate Reality. Its purpose was to spread Brahmavidya as expounded in the Upanishads. Devendranath and the members of the Tatvabodhini Sabha regarded the Upanishads as the Vedanta and they had no reliance on the Vedanta Darsana. Devendranath thought—wrongly we believe—that the sole teaching of Vedanta Darsana was the mayavada of Sankara.[2] His heart gave nc response to Mayavada. The world-process is never an illusion, a maya. It is as real as the Absolute Himself. The mayavadin has the inveterate habit of denouncing the world as a piece of illusion but such ar attitude was unacceptable to Devendranath. Bu Advaitavad or absolute monism was equally unacceptable to him. He believed in the relation of worship between the Absolute and finite beings. The Absolute and the finite never become one. The Maha

[1] See *Brahmo Dharmer Mat O Biswas.* (2nd Sermon).

[2] *Autobiography*, 6th Chapter (Note by S. Chakravartty)

rshi supports, it seems, the theory of Dvaitavad (Dualism).[1] But by dualism he does not mean that the finite has got an independent existence as against the Infinite. All that he means is this that the finite though created and sustained by the Infinite never becomes identical with it. The only destiny of the finite is to worship the Infinite but how can there be worship unless there are two—the Deity and the devotee, the worshipped and the worshipper? In this respect his view is similar to that of Nimbarka.

Raja Rammohun believed in the infallibility of the Vedas. Devendranath too began by looking upon the Vedas as the sole philosophical authority but later on doubts began to arise in his mind. He sent four students to Benares, the then seat of philosophical learning in India to study the Vedas very closely. After their return Devendranath had discourses with them and came to the conclusion that the Vedas were not infallible.[2] He rejected the Vedic authority but concentrated all his attention on the Upanishads. The Upanishads taught him the gist of all philosophies—God is One and the created objects worship Him—. While accepting the Upanishads, he did not however, as pointed out earlier, abide by the decisions of Sankara as to their final teaching.

But did he accept the whole of the Upanishads?

[1] See Notes by Satis Chakravartty. *Autobiography* Appendix No. 45.

[2] "In course of time we knew about the defects of the Vedas and decided only to accept such assertions of the Vedas as are really true. For full two years we worked on the Sruti and the Smriti and compiled the book on Brahmo Dharma." * *Panchabingshati*, pp. 27-33.

The answer is in the negative. He ransacked the entire field of the Upanishads and gathered together what appealed to him most. These he incorporated into the Brahmo Dharma or the Religion of the Brahmos. The Brahmo Dharma is thus clearly an off-shoot of the Upanishads.

While collecting the materials from the Upanishads to build the principles of Brahmo Dharma, the Maharshi relied mainly on reason. Yet an utter misunderstanding of his philosophy will ensue if we think that he relied exclusively on reason. On several occasions in his own life-time he got illuminating experiences which were due to intuition and not to reason. He felt the Divine presence in his heart. In his *Autobiography* we come across several instances of this Divine companionship.

In such states he would hear orders (Adesh) from the Almighty. These orders played an important rôle in his spiritual life, which had several stages. The first was to know God's nature, the second was to submit to His orders and the last was to enjoy His company in love.[1]

Devendranath was a mystic. When we carefully go through his *Autobiography* we find that at the prime of his life he was once more seized by despondency but gradually overcame this period of pain of the dark night of the soul and he found God in his own heart. His heart leaped up with joy when he had realised the One Immutable in him. He began to pray—

O my God, Come and live in me for all times.

[1] *Autobiography*, Appendix No. 28 (note by Satis Chakravartty).

Do not desert me.[1]

Devendranath's religion or Brahmo Dharma can be summed up in one formula—The relation between God and man is the relation of the worshipped and the worshipper.[2] To love God was the motto of his spiritual life. To all worldly affairs Devendranath maintained, like a true mystic, a detached attitude. He was often entangled by domestic and social troubles but every time he was saved by the grace of God. God, he wrote in his *Autobiography*, gave him the help and guidance he needed. He was in the world but above it.

We have seen briefly what the central significance of the Brahmo Dharma is and in what way it affected Devendranath's personal life. But who is a Brahmo? According to the Maharshi, a Brahmo is one who does not worship any finite deity but worships only the Eternal and Immutable God.[3] Worship of the Immutable One is the keynote of the Dharma. It states that Brahman is one and non-dual. (Ekamebadwitiyam Brahman). He is truth and infinite knowledge. He manifests Himself as Anandam. He is repose and goodness. Everything is created by Anandam and received back by it at the time of dissolution.

The religion of the Brahmos rests on four cardinal truths :

> In the beginning there was only one Brahman and none else. He created all that we see around us.

[1] *Ibid.*, XIIth Chapter.
[2] *Ibid.*, XXIInd Chapter.
[3] See *Patravali* (of Maharshi) No. 29

He is infinite, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, non-dual, independent and perfect. He is knowledge, goodness, and bliss and He cannot be compared to anything else.

Good in this life and hereafter can be achieved only by prayer to Him.

The prayer consists in doing such actions as can please Him.[1]

What were the ethical views of the Maharshi? They were few but they embodied the sound principles of a good moral life. As a healthy body is needed for a healthy mind, so is a healthy mind necessary for a healthy soul.[2] Unless the soul is purified there cannot be any chance of knowing and enjoying the Divine Being. If somebody's mind be unclean, it may be cleansed by repentance. All sinners can be redeemed by the grace of God.[3] One should be indifferent to material prosperity because it lowers our self down. Dharma is the sure means of realising the Infinite God but it cannot be followed by those who aspire after material pleasures. Real happiness lies in the Great. In such small pleasures as we find around us, we find no real happiness. Duty is the principal thing of a man's life. He whose heart is set on God is happy amidst all sorrows and adversities.

[1] ओ३म् ब्रह्म वा एकमिदमग्र आसीत् नान्यत् किंचनासीत् ।
तदिदं सर्वमसृजत् । तदेव नित्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं शिवं स्वतन्त्रम्
निरवयवमेकमेवाद्वितीयम् सर्वव्यापि सर्वनियन्तृ सर्वाश्रयं सर्ववित्
सर्वशक्तिमद् ध्रुवं पूर्णमप्रतिममिति ।
एकस्य तस्यैवोपासनया पारत्रिकमैहिकंच शुभं भवति ।
तस्मिन् प्रीतिस्तस्य प्रियकार्यसाधनं च तदुपासनमेव ॥

[2] *Brahmo Dharmer Mat O Biswas* (3rd Sermon)

[3] *Brahmo Dharmer Mat O Biswas*, (3rd Sermon)

Lastly, about his views on immortality and salvation. According to him, the soul is never to be identified with the body. At death the body is sure to be disintegrated but the benevolent God never wills the destruction of the soul. The body is composed of atoms and hence it can be destroyed as its atoms are disintegrated. But the soul is one unit, it has no form or feature.[1] What becomes of the soul at death? Through every death it becomes more and more perfect. Infinite perfection of the soul is what the Maharshi means by salvation or Moksha.[2] If, in every life, one does such actions as are dear to God, his soul is in process of perfection. But is there any end of this process? Devendranath is rather chary of saying anything positive on it. But he is emphatic on one point, viz., salvation of the finite does not lie in becoming the Infinite. Salvation is only the infinite perfection of the soul under the benevolence and bliss of God.

[1] *Ibid.*, (VIIth Sermon).
[2] *Ibid.*, (Xth Sermon).

KESHAB CHANDRA SEN

When Devendranath was shining as a spiritual luminary, a promising young man swam into his ken. This youth so captured his affection that he dreamt of placing the responsibilities of religious leadership on him. For some years matters went on quite smoothly. It seemed as if the dreams of the Guru were going to be fulfilled. But alas ! one day the disciple broke with the master. That disciple is Keshab Chandra.

Keshab Chandra was born on the 19th of November, 1838 at Calcutta. He belonged to the wealthy family of Sens of Garifa. "I was reared", says Keshab, "by a wealthy father and grandfather. Opulence and luxury surrounded my childhood, but as I grew up my mind began to show the spirit of natural poverty."[1] During his boyhood he showed no signs of precocious spirituality. But he was singularly moral in his speech, action and thought. "He was a noble pure-minded boy, free from falsehood, free from vice."[2]

Keshab was educated at the Hindu College. After he had left the college, he devoted himself to the study of mental and moral philosophy. In 1857 he quietly entered the Brahmo Samaj by signing its printed covenant. Devendranath felt most happy when he heard of the conversion of the Hindu Keshab to the

[1] Quoted by P. C. Mozoomdar in his book, *The life and teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen*, p. 54 (1931).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

Brahmo religion. He at once took him within his fold and they two concerted a plan of action for the advance of the Brahmo Dharma. "The plan in the beginning was that Keshab should deliver a series of English lectures and Devendranath a similar course in the vernacular, the former taking up the philosophy of theism and the latter dealing with the doctrines and theology of the Brahmo Samaj."[1] When Keshab was barely twenty-two in 1860, he published his first tract entitled, *Young Bengal, This is for you*, which was followed by many others. "In his first published writing....Keshab laid down the principle on which he carried on the whole work of his reform, intellectual, social, domestic and religious. 'Living truths' he perceived so early as that and they opened out to him the fiery course which he followed with untiring fidelity for the next twenty-four years, till his life ended."[2]

At an early stage of his religious sadhana Keshab derived considerable inner strength from the contemplation of the Divine. For his own guidance Keshab wrote: "Conduct yourself with wariness and constancy, strength and enthusiasm, but above all with thorough resignation to the Divine will. Steadily and prayerfully look up to Him, our Light, our Strength, our Father, and our Friend. He will feed your mind with saving knowledge, your heart with the sweets of love, your soul with purity, and your hands with strength and courage. Retain Him in the depths of

[1] *The life and teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen*, p. 73 (1931).
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 79

your heart, and affectionately cling to Him all the days of your life."[1]

Keshab believed in the spontaneity of prayer. The necessity of prayer cannot be logically proved and he repudiated such an attempt. According to him a deep want, a longing of the soul is the origin of prayer. He advocated the doctrine of intuitions which was the gist of his philosophical teachings. He defines intuitions as "those principles of the mind which are above, anterior to, and independent of reflection." They are the "facts of our Constitution which we cannot create or destroy." He names the intuitions of "Cause, Substance, Power, Infinity, Duty as immediately apprehensible."[2] The Infinite God was, to him neither a logical nor a historical Divinity. He was an ever-present and ever-living Reality. He could see and feel Him. This tinge of mysticism deepened itself in his later life.

Devendranath's Brahmo Dharma, we have seen, was essentially the Hindu religion. In spite of his diksha in Brahmoism Devendranath remained essentially a Hindu. It is true that he purified Hinduism by expunging from it the practice of idolatry but he conceived his religion with a Hindu mind. "In his work in connection with the Brahmo Samaj he (Devendranath) had ever kept in view two principles—(1) that the Brahmo Samaj is a purely Hindu institution intended principally for Hindus and representing the highest form of Hinduism, (2) secondly, that its mission is chiefly religious as distinguished from social, and that

[1–2] *The life and teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen*, p. 79.

questions of social reform properly belonged to individual tastes and inclinations."[1]

But Keshab had, if one may say so, a more catholic outlook on religion. He did not like the idea that Brahmo Dharma should be only the essence of Hinduism. He was attracted by the teachings of Christianity and he incorporated many elements of the Christian religion into his theory and practice of Brahmo Dharma. But Devendranath was extremely critical about Christianity. He would never tolerate that Christianity should spread on the soil of India. In a letter he writes: "What is the secretary of the Harisabha doing? If he is not trying to combat the aggression of the Christians he must be made to do so. To allow the Christians to enter into our families for the purpose of proselytising is to break our own heads."[2]

Another source of misunderstanding between the two was that Keshab had made social reform a plank of his Brahmo Dharma. But Devendra was not willing to accept it as a religious duty. "....Devendra himself, though he felt like a father towards his gifted young helper, was very much afraid that spiritual religion would be sacrificed to the new passion for social reform. To him the latter was of very little consequence as compared with the former."[3]

The difference between the Guru and the disciple on these and other vital matters at last led to an unhappy rupture between the two. Keshab left the main camp and the schism was complete. Keshab thus en-

[1] Shivanath Sastri, *History of Brahmo Samaj*, p. 188.
[2] See *Patravali*, (of Maharshi) No. 107 (The letter is in Bengali).
[3] *Modern Religious movements in India*, by Farquhar, p. 43. (1918).

tered a new and independent spiritual career. On the 11th November, 1866 he founded the "Brahmo Samaj of India." Its members would include people of all races and communities. Selections from all the scriptures of all nations of the world were compiled for use as devotional lessons. Keshab wanted to make his Samaj the universal church for all mankind. The motto of the Samaj was: "The wide universe is the temple of God; Wisdom is the pure land of pilgrimage; Truth is the everlasting scripture; Faith is the root of all religion; Love is the true spiritual culture; the Destruction of selfishness is the true asceticism; So declare the Brahmos."[1]

While engaged in a missionary tour in connexion with the spread of the Brahmo religion, he compiled a tract called '*True Faith*'. "Faith", he defines, "is direct vision, it beholdeth God and it beholdeth immortality. It relieth upon no evidence but the eyesight; and will have no meditation. It neither borroweth an idea of God from metaphysics, nor a narrative of God from history. The God of faith is the sublime I AM. In time He is always now, in space always here............Faith holds a living and loving connexion with Him Who is dearer than life." Keshab had always a great reliance on faith and he called prudence 'the arithmetic of fools'. In simple faith he would always pray to the Infinite and a strong persis-

[1] *The life and teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen*, p. 111
सुविशालमिदं विश्वं पवित्रम् ब्रह्ममन्दिरम्,
चेतः सुनिर्मलं तीर्थं सत्यं शास्त्रमनश्वरम् ।
विश्वासो धर्ममूलं हि प्रीतिः परमसाधनम्,
स्वार्थनाशस्तु वैराग्यं ब्राह्मैरेवं प्रकीर्त्यते ।। धर्मतत्त्व ।

tency in prayerfulness was the main characteristic of his life. While praying he would wait for Divine commands (Adesh). In all walks of his spiritual life, he was guided by Divine Adesh. Like a mystic he would often hear the voice of God. Thus he writes in *Jeevan Veda*, "If there be a voice speaking from inside the heart, men usually call it a ghost. He, that is possessed by ghost, hears voices within and outside himself. From the dawn of religious life I have heard such voices, both inside and outside. Yet I have never taken them to be ghosts. This is another peculiarity of my life. In many instances have I found there is a person within the person, there is a tongue within the tongue, and they talk in different voices, and the voices can be distinguished by the ear. Men talk, reflect, judge and then learn religious truths. I have often confessed that I came not to the path of religion by this process. But within the 'I' there is a 'Thou' separate from myself. That called out to me; That I perceive; and by His word I want to practise religion. That there is this Some One speaking within the heart is a truth of repeated experience. I know there are people who did not hear this voice. And it is also said that this kind of hearing gives rise to superstitions, it does harm, it is supernaturalism and those who believe it are mad men. If this be madness, I wish to be counted among the mad; it is the madness of faith, it is the lunacy of salvation, because I do not call it the voice of ghost, but the voice of God. I can never disbelieve this voice."[1]

[1] Translation by P. C. Mozoomdar. See *Life and teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen*, Appendix A. "The Voice of God."

Keshab had rendered service to the 'Brahmo Samaj of India' by introducing the Bhakti cult into the religion. The spirit of the Vaishnava faith entered into Brahmo devotions. By basing the Brahmo Religion on feeling and faith, Keshab had given it a mass appeal, which neither the Raja's intellectuality nor Devendranath's pure contemplation ever could. Devendranath's Brahmo Dharma was meant for the enlightened few who could devote themselves to Divine contemplation. Keshab's Bhakti-religion was meant for all, it had a spiritual kinship with the teachings of Sree Chaitanya, the apostle of Bhakti in India.

We have mentioned earlier that Keshab had incorporated many practices of Christianity in his religion. Indeed this peculiarity gave his Brahmo religion a unique form. Keshab was greatly influenced by his studies of Christianity. His passion for social reform and infusion of the spirit of repentance and prayer into the Brahmo Dharma may be ascribed to the Christian culture. The influence of Christianity became explicit when he changed the 'Brahmo Samaj of India' into the church of the 'New Dispensation' (Nava Vidhan). Keshab proclaimed the New Dispensation in 1880. By Dispensation he means, "God's saving mercy adapting itself in a special manner to the requirements of special epochs in the world's history. True it is that the Universal Father loves all his children alike, but He does not deal with all of them alike. In various ways does He deal with different nations, communities and individuals to bring about their salvation.... How strikingly had the Lord been dealing with our degraded nation during the last hundred years, and

adopting marvellous means and agencies to elevate its social and moral condition. They constitute, therefore, a special Dispensation of mercy to the Indian race. These special Dispensations of Providence differ according to the peculiarities of each race, but they never jar with each other. They cannot clash though apparently dissimilar......What I accept as New Dispensation in India neither shuts out God's light from the rest of the world, nor does it run counter to any of those marvellous Dispensations of His mercy which were made in ancient times."[1]

Between the years 1879 and 1882 he delivered four important discourses which reflected Christian influence on Nava Vidhan.[2]

He adapted the Christian doctrine of Trinity to Indian usage. He says: "Here you have the complete triangular figure of the Trinity, three profound truths, the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost making up the harmonious whole of the economy of creation. Look at this clear triangular figure with the eye of the faith, and study its deep mathematics....Sat, Chit, Ananda, Truth, Intelligence, Joy."[3] He had also introduced a few Christian celebrations and ceremonies into his Dharma. He introduced Baptism and the Lord's Supper in a modified form, christianised Brahmoism so to speak.

Towards the end of his spiritual career Keshab

[1] See *Lectures in India.*

[2] "India asks: Who is Christ" 1879.
"God-vision in the nineteenth century" 1880.
"We, the Apostles of New Dispensation" 1881.
"That marvellous Mystery, the Trinity." 1882.

[3] "That marvellous Mystery, the Trinity."

had recourse to Yoga. During his last sojourn in the Himalayas he wrote a series of essays entitled, *Yoga: Subjective and Objective.* He defined Yoga thus: "The created soul in its worldly and sinful condition lives separate and estranged from the Supreme Soul. A reconciliation is needed; nay, more than a mere reconciliation. A harmonious union is sought and realised. This union with the Deity is the real secret of Hindu yoga. It is spiritual unification, it is a consciousness of two in one; duality in unity."[1]

He tried to keep the yogic practices free from polytheism as well as pantheism and base them on a pure theistic principle. The Yogi, according to him, sees himself and the universe as living in the Universal Will-force. In the lecture on *God-vision in the nineteenth century* he thinks of God as Force. "What is the single force to which both mind and matter may be referred ultimately, which will fulfil the desire of ages, and the hope of the scientific world? In these walls and in these pillars, in the men and women assembled in this hall, in the earth below, and heaven above, in the light and in the air, in the world within and the world without, in history and in biography, what is the single force that pervades all and guides all, supports and quickens all?....I unhesitatingly call it God-Force, a personal creative Force, an intelligent Will-force.[2] This Will-force is also a Person who is true, beautiful and good. When the cognitive faculty of the Yogi apprehends the qualities of the Infinite Personality, his heart overflows with emotions.

[1] See *Yoga: Subjective and Objective.*
[2] Delivered in 1880. See *Lectures in India.*

Faith, intellect and feeling help him to have God-consciousness. At that stage of God-realisation, the observer and the observed, the subject and the object become one. Keshab during the last few years of his life practised Yoga as a means of God-realisation. He believed in what he called Subjective Yoga. When the mind retreats from the external to the internal world, from observation to introspection, it cultivates the deepest communion with the Supreme Spirit. This he called Subjective Yoga and practised it with great zeal. He passed away in 1884.

PARMAHANSADEVA RAMAKRISHNA

Ramakrishnadeva[1] did not preach any new religious view; nor did he advise his followers to abide by any new way of Sadhana. He had no scruples in accepting the various paths or stages of different religious systems. If he was original, it was in his insistence that the final and sole aim of man is God-consciousness.

For himself Ramakrishna followed the austere Hindu way of sadhana; but he had also tried the ways of the Muslims and the Christians. He found that his own realisations were in fundamental agreement with the teachings of these scriptures.

Ramakrishna preached and practised synthesis in religion. Keshab too had drawn largely from many living religions for his New Dispensation. But Keshab's and Ramakrishna's synthesis are not of the same nature. Keshab's was an intellectual unification, it was not enlivened by direct experience, it was not 'realised'. But Ramakrishna did not attempt at an intellectual synthesis of the different religions. He realised the synthesis in his life.

God-realisation is the keynote of Ramakrishna's spiritual endeavour. To know *about* God and to realise

[1] Ramakrishnadeva's original name was Gadadhar Chattopadhyaya. Born of Brahmin parents, he was a priest at the temple of Dakshineswar. He was no scholar and had very little knowledge of the Hindu Darsanas. He sought for God and realised Him by the path of Bhakti.

Him are poles asunder. Mere ratiocination about God's existence and nature does not help us in realising Him. The shastras, scriptures and philosophies are the signposts of the discursive understanding to prove His existence. But the goal is to be reached by realisation which is the fruit of intuition. Love and surrender are its means.

But what is God? He is the ultimate Reality that is everywhere. "There are pearls in the sea, but you must dive again and again until you find them. So God is in the world, but you will have to persevere to see Him."[1]

To realise God one must seek for Him and he who seeks Him sincerely gets Him. But what agonies one has to bear, what mental and even physical torture one has to undergo when one seeks Him! Ramakrishna passed through these trials and hardships till he came face to face with the Infinite. He would tell his disciples of these sufferings: "Oh, what days of madness I passed through! You cannot imagine the pangs I felt owing to the separation from Mother. And it was but natural. Suppose there is a bag of gold in a room and a thief in the next with only a thin partition between. Can he then sleep peacefully? Will he not run mad and try to force the wall so as to possess the gold? Such was my state too. I knew that there was the Mother, quite close to me, full of infinite Bliss, compared with which all earthly possessions were as nothing. How could I then rest satisfied without trying to find Her? So I became mad after

[1] See *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 188 (New Edition).

Her."[1] He emphasised that one must know how to seek Him. A search that comes from the heart is sincere and cannot go in vain. This pure seeking he called the Satva element of the Bhakti. But you must never make a parade of your seeking. That introduces the Rajas element to the Bhakti and debases it.

Ramakrishna believed, as we have said, in all religious practices; many gods, to him, were the manifestations of the One God. He says: "I see Him in all, man, image, stone, everywhere I see Him. I see one and not two or many."[2] For him, monism, qualified monism and dualism are not antagonistic to one another. They are all the various steps and the final one is monism or Advaitavad. Does Ramakrishna believe in a Personal God or in the Impersonal Absolute? He says: "God is one, but many are His aspects. As one master of the house appears in various aspects, being father to one, brother to another and husband to a third, so one God is described and called in various ways according to the particular aspect in which He appears to the particular worshipper."[3] According to him, when the Supreme Being is thought of as inactive, he is called Absolute and in His active aspect He is called Personal God. Ramakrishna sought God in both aspects though mostly he prayed to Him as a Personal Deity.

As to the question whether God is with or without form, he gives us the direct reply: "God with

[1] *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp. 107-108.

[2] See *Sri Sri Ramakrishnakathamrita*, p. 196 (Vol. IV, Ist Ed.) (in Bengali).

[3] *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 10 (New Ed.).

form and without form are not two different Beings. He Who is with form is also without form. To a devotee God manifests Himself in various forms. Just think of a shoreless ocean—an infinite expanse of water—no land visible in any direction; only here and there are visible blocks of ice formed by intense cold. Similarly by the cooling influence, so to say, of the deep devotion of His worshipper, the Infinite reduces Himself into the finite and appears before him as a Being with form. Again as on the appearance of the sun, the ice melts away, so on the appearance of knowledge, God with form melts away into the formless."[1] One begins by worshipping God with form, but this must not be taken as the final state. Through form one goes to the formless. It is true, Ramakrishna himself worshipped God in the image of Kali but through this form he reached the formless Absolute, the Brahman.

Ramakrishna's religious view may be called pantheism in its purest form. He would say: "When I meet different people I say to myself, "God in the form of the saint, God in the form of the sinner. God in the form of the righteous, God in the form of the unrighteous." The Lord being pleased with Prahlad's prayers and hymns asked him what boon he desired. He replied, "Lord, forgive those who oppressed me, in punishing them Thou wilt be punishing Thyself for verily Thou abidest in everything."[2]

Ramakrishna was a God-intoxicated man, if ever

[1] *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 8 (New Ed.).

[2] See *Prabuddha Bharat*, p. 115 (Ramakrishna Centenary Number).

there was one. A kind of divine madness would seize him when he thought or heard of God. The very name of God or Kali would throw him into a trance. Samadhi was so natural to him that even an inert piece of matter, a natural scene or the sight of an animal would be sufficient for him to transcend normal consciousness. In such state of Samadhi he would enjoy super-consciousness where dwells eternal bliss or ananda. One day (in a zoo-garden) as he was looking at a lion, same feelings came over him.[1] Another day the sight of clouds in the field had the same effect. Here is his own account of it: "I was following a narrow path between the rice-fields. I raised my eyes to the sky as I munched my rice. I saw a great black cloud spreading rapidly until it covered the heavens. Suddenly at the edge of the cloud a flight of snow-white cranes passed over my head. The contrast was so beautiful that my spirit wandered far away. I lost consciousness and fell to the ground. The puffed rice was scattered. Somebody picked me up and carried me home in his arms...... Joy and emotion overcame me......"[2]

At other times the very sight of Narendranath (Swami Vivekananda) would induce in him the state of Samadhi. "On numerous occasions he would be overcome by emotion at the sight of Narendra and stammer, "Here comes Na—, here comes Na—", unable to complete the sentence, and would then enter into Samadhi."[3] While in these states he would some-

[1] *Ramakrishnakathamrita*, p. 81 (Vol. IV.) Ist Ed.
[2] *The Life of Ramakrishna* (by Romain Rolland), p. 26.
[3] *Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 449.

times weep and behave like a child. As he would gradually return to normal consciousness, he would talk to the Divine Mother as though she was a living Presence.

Ramakrishna looked down upon lust and gold with extreme disgust. For him, these are the two great obstacles to Sadhana. As a liberated soul he would see in any woman the presence of the Divine Mother. In his married life he had no physical relations with his wife. One day, his wife Sarada Devi as she was massaging his feet, asked him "How do you look upon me?" Quick came the answer, "The Mother who is worshipped in the temple is the mother who has given birth to this body and is now living in the concert-room, and she again is massaging my feet at this moment. Verily I always look upon you as the visible representation of the Blissful Mother."[1] Gold he hated most and whenever he would touch money, a pain ran down his spinal column. His advice to the Yogis or aspirants after spiritual liberation was to get rid of these two evils—lust and gold. They are maya or illusion.[2] To the householders his counsel was: "Do not become absorbed in sex and gold. Use them according to your need but do not make them your ideals. Always keep your eye on the Divine." "Live in the world but be not worldly...... Always do your duties unattached, with your mind fixed on God."[3] Ramakrishna exalted renunciation and this is why he was [illegible] emphatic in denying attachments

[1] *Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 336.
[2] *Ramakrishna Kathamrita*, Vol. II, p. 104 (5th Ed.).
[3] *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 107 (New Ed.).

to sex and gold. According to him, householders cannot fully realise God for they cannot devote themselves fully to His services. Only those who have renounced the world can attain Him completely.

We have pointed out earlier that Ramakrishna's spiritual attitude was pantheistic. One Lord is doing everything everywhere. Even the leaves of the tree do not move without His will. But the question naturally arises: Is there no room for human free-will? Ramakrishna's answer to it is definite and clear. On several occasions he told his disciples: "We human beings are only the machines. Mother is the mechanic. We are the chariots and she is the charioteer. We move as She directs."[1]

Judged from the standpoint of empirical philosophy, one might say that according to Ramakrishna, human beings are only the means and not ends. If everything happens according to His will, what then, is the value of human effort? What becomes of our moral aspirations? But from the transcendental view of things all such doubts and anomalies disappear. He is the only Reality, He is in me, you and everything. The human being is not a mean trifle, God is in him. Another difficulty in this connection is that if God be the only agent of all actions, can we be held responsible for our wrong and evil actions? We may indulge in sinful actions and console ourselves by saying that all sins are His actions. But Ramakrishna clarifies the position by saying: "He who has really known that God is in him, cannot do any evil or sinful action. Once you feel that your body is the abode

[1] *Ramakrishnakathamrita*, Vol. IV, p. 244 (1st Ed.)

philosophical works which tend to show that the earlier passages are to be taken in a merely figurative sense. He also argues: "It cannot be alleged in support of idolatry that although a knowledge of God is certainly above all things, still as it is impossible to acquire that knowledge, men should, of course, worship figured gods; for, had it been impossible to attain a knowledge of the Supreme Being, the Vedas and Puranas as well as Tantras, would not have instructed mankind to aim at such attainment; as it is not to be supposed that direction to acquire what is obviously unattainable could be given by the Shastra, or even by a man of common sense. Should the idolator say that the acquisition of a knowledge of God, although it is not impossible, is most difficult of comprehension, I will agree with him in that point; but infer from it, that we ought, therefore, the more to exert ourselves, to acquire that knowledge; but I highly lament to observe, that so far from endeavouring to make such an acquisition, the very proposal frequently excites his anger and displeasure."[1] Again it cannot be said that the adoration of the Supreme Being is only meant for the Sannyasins. From the 48th text of the third chapter of the Vedanta it is evident that the householder also is required to perform the worship of the Absolute, who is formless. The Raja definitely asserts by quoting a few texts[2] of the Vedas: "Adore God alone. None but the Supreme Being is to be wor-

[1] See *English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, p. 65. (Panini Office).

[2] See *A Second defence of the monotheistical system of the Vedas* (by Rammohun Roy).

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA[1]

Ramakrishnadeva's realisation had to be utilised for the benefit of humanity. Ramakrishna was looking for a suitable disciple when one day young Vivekananda appeared before him. The very sight of the young man created a stir in the master's heart. In Vivekananda the master found a solid rock on which he wanted to build an undying Spiritual Order. He knew that Vivekananda would carry his message to the wide world. In his meteoric life, the young Swami did fulfil the expectation.

Like the rest of the intellectually minded young men of his times Vivekananda was well read in western philosophy. Intellect, he thought, could throw light on the nature of God. But the course of his life changed totally when he came in contact with Ramakrishnadeva, according to whom, it is not knowledge but realisation which is true religion. Compared to realisation the highest human knowledge is pitiful. Thinking of Reality is good but the vision of it is better. It was from him that the disciple learned the lesson—

[1] The original name of Swami Vivekananda was Narendranath Datta. Even while a boy, he had a great fancy for wandering monks. He realised the Atman and preached the Vedantic doctrine to suffering humanity. "A Plato in thought, a modern Savonarola in his fearless outspokenness and adored as a Master and as a Prophet, the Swami moved amongst his disciples as some great Bodhisattva amongst his devotees." See *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, by his Eastern and Western disciples, Vol. I, p. 502 (2nd Ed.).

intense longing for God is sure to bring one face to face with Him. It was Ramakrishnadeva again who gave him the real teaching of the Vedanta. He says: "From the words of wisdom which Sri Ramakrishna uttered in an ecstatic mood, I have understood that the ideal of Vedanta lived by the recluse outside the pale of society can be practised even from hearth and home and applied to all our daily schemes of life. Whatever may be the avocation of a man, let him understand and realise that it is God alone who has manifested Himself as the world and created beings. He is both immanent and transcendent. It is He who has become all diverse creatures, objects of our love, respect or compassion and yet He is beyond all these. Such realisation of Divinity in humanity leaves no room for arrogance. By realising it man cannot have any jealousy or pity for any other being. Service of man, knowing him to be the manifestation of God, purifies the heart and, in no time, such an aspirant realises himself as part and parcel of God."[1]

To his disciples the Swami explained the Vedanta thus: The Jiva is an individual and Isvara is the sum-total of all Jivas. In the Jiva, avidya is predominant. But Brahman transcends both Jivas and Isvara. "That part of Brahman in which there is the superimposition of creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe, has been spoken of as Isvara in the scriptures."[2] Jivas and the universe have been superimposed on Brahman. In reality, Brahman is beyond any modi-

[1] See *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, by his Eastern and Western disciples, Vol. I. p. 129 (2nd Ed.).

[2] *Talks with Swami Vivekananda*, p. 228.

fication. The universe endures only in name and form. When this notion of name and form is gone, comes the real knowledge. The Jiva realises that he is Siva or the Brahman. *Tat tvam asi*, Thou art that.

The concept of maya attracted the attention of the Swami and his elucidation of it is an intellectual achievement. The theology of Hinduism as it was presented by the Swami in the west centres round the concepts of maya and Brahman. Maya is that "shimmering, elusive, half-real, half-unreal complexity in which there is no rest, no satisfaction, no ultimate certainty, of which we become aware through the senses and through the mind as dependent on the senses."[1] So long as maya exists, the real knowledge cannot dawn on the individual. The moment its veil is pierced, all multiplicity, uncertainty, and unrest are gone, and the individual realises his Self, the Brahman. The One pervades all existence.

Vivekananda was often assailed by his disciples with the question—Are there gods or is there only the Absolute? He did not deny the gods, the images and the symbols. Only he used to say: "The impersonal God, seen through the mists of sense is personal."[2] Multiplicity is a product of sense-knowledge. Images and symbols help the devotee towards establishing a personal relationship with the ultimate Reality.

It was, as we have said, the Vedantic religion that Vivekananda preached. But Vedanta is a vast study

[1] *The Master as I saw him*, by Sister Nivedita, p. 25 (4th Ed.).
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

and its philosophy has been differently interpreted by different exegetes. Vivekananda looks upon Vedanta not merely as a philosophy but as a philosophic religion. Now there are critics who think that philosophy and religion are incompatible. The study of philosophy centres round the Absolute while religion moves round God. Philosophy has no scope for worship or personal relations which form the very heart of religion. But, for Vivekananda, such an arbitrary distinction between God and the Absolute is utterly foreign. The Absolute or God is in our inner being. "Thou art He, O, Man! Thou are He." The Absolute, God, and the finite man are one.

Vivekananda stood for the Vedantic religion or Hinduism in its universal aspect. He did not preach the doctrines of any particular sect of Hinduism. Before the Parliament of Religions at Chicago he introduced Hinduism as "the mother of religions, a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance." He quoted two appropriate passages from the scriptures of Hinduism to describe its catholicity.

> "As the different streams having their sources in different places, all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take, through different tendencies, various though they may appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee!"

> "Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me!"[1]

[1] *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. I, p. 370.

The Vedanta is a practical religion and it teaches men to have faith in themselves. Not to believe in oneself, in the glory of the soul is weakness. Every one of us is potentially Divine. By thinking of ourselves as sinners and miserable mortals, we hypnotise ourselves. Vivekananda asks us to make an end of such soul-killing hypnosis. The soul never dies, nor is it born. All talk of mortality of soul is gibberish for the soul is omnipresent. In his lecture on 'Immortality', the Swami says: "The soul of man is part of the cosmic energy that exists, which is God. We now find that it is beyond life and death. You were never born and you will never die. What is this birth and death that we see around us? This belongs to the body only, because the soul is omnipresent."[1]

If the Swami hated anything, it was weakness. Weakness of body or mind was to him repugnant. For him, the Vedanta breathes one idea, strength. The soul or the Atman is not to be known by the weak. Buddha had taught non-injury but Vivekananda felt that behind that doctrine lurked a dreadful weakness. His own ideal was that giant of a saint whom they killed in the Mutiny, and who broke his silence when stabbed to the heart, to say—'And thou also art He'—[2] He adored Lord Krishna who combined in him strength and realisation. Courage leads a man to success, whether material or spiritual. Cowardice is doomed. Fear of family, society and environment and weak attachment for ordinary values, hinder us from attaining our

[1] *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, part II, p. 234. (3rd Ed.).

[2] *The Master as I saw him*, pp. 240-41.

real selves. Vivekananda exhorts all aspirants to conquer weakness in every form. 'The Infinite Power is lying potential in every heart. Arise, Awake and Fear not.'

Another feature of his Vedantic religion is the acceptance of all religious faiths. Most of the living religions tolerate the experiences of one another. But the Swami went a step further than that. "I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all; I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his laws. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu who is trying to see the light which enlightens the heart of every one. Not only shall I do these but I shall keep my heart open for all that may come in the future."[1] He not only tolerates, he accepts.

Also, the Vedantic religion is in agreement with the fundamental principles of science. Sometimes the Swami would describe his religion as a 'Scientific Vedantic Religion.' "The first principle of (scientific) reasoning is that the particular is explained by the general—until we come to the universal. A second explanation of knowledge is that the explanation of a thing must come from inside and not from outside... The Advaita satisfies these two principles."[2] Unity

[1] *The Complete works of Swami Vivekananda*, part II, p. 372. (3rd Ed.).
[2] *The Complete works*, part I, p. 368 ff. (4th Ed.).

or non-dualism is also the aim of the sciences. Nothing short of the One will satisfy either the spiritualist or the scientist. The Advaita can be added to the sciences without doing any harm to them.

Though the Swami accepted a variety of religious beliefs and practices, yet his attention was more on the goal than on the roads leading to it. As to the path, the Swami adored the Sannyasa or renunciation. The monastic life with its control and conquest of the senses was, to him, the royal road to salvation. He thought, the highest aim of religious life is to create in the individual a sense of non-attachment. He would speak of four kinds of Sannyasa, viz., (1) Vidwat, (2) Vividisha, (3) Markata and (4) Atura. Vidwat Sannyasa is due to some strong tendencies, (Samskaras) of previous births. Vividisha can be practised after having lessons from persons who have already realized the Atman. Markata Sannyasa is only a clever device to avoid the realities of life. The last variety is prescribed for the dying man. If he dies, he dies with the holiest of vows and in the next life becomes more advanced spiritually. And if he recovers, he passes the rest of his days in pursuit of right knowledge (Para Vidya). Whatever might be the motive or origin of Sannyasa, the goal of the Sannyasin is to become a knower of Brahman. This he does by embracing the vow of renunciation. If Sannyasa is the summum bonum, how can the householders act up to it? To this the Swami said that a few householders might attain to the highest freedom by the correct fulfilment of the householder's Dharma, but he was not quite sure of the final utility of such a Dharma.

The Swami preached Karma (disinterested action) but his Karma was not separated from Jnana and Bhakti. The crowning significance of the Swami's teaching is, however, the identity of the One and the many. If the One and the many be the same reality, all modes of worship and even all modes of work are paths to salvation. No distinction can be made between the religious and the secular. To him, "the workshop, the study, the farmyard and the field, are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man, as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple."[1]

To work is to pray. But what work? Is it motivated by fame, money or power? The real Karma-yogin works not for any ulterior motive but for the sake of work. He has the right to work but not to its fruits or results. But how should he work? The real secret of work is to work with restraint. The ideal worker is "he who in the midst of intensest activity finds the silence and solitude of the desert."[2] Let us work, for it is our dharma to work. Duty which is usually rigid becomes sweet when prompted by love. It helps us to develop our true selves that lie hidden in us. Karma is best done in the spirit of non-attachment. In non-attachment the "I" or ego vanishes, and its actions become free. The end of Jnana and Bhakti is also self-abnegation. So, we find that Karma-yoga, Jnanayoga and Bhaktiyoga meet at the end of

[1] See *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, part I, (1923). Introduction, pp. XIII, XIV.

[2] See *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, part I. (1923) p. 32.

the road. 'Thy will be done'—is the hymn of acceptance of all Yogins.

How to reconcile Jnana with Bhakti? The layman finds it difficult to resolve the conflict between the two. The followers of the Bhakti cult shudder to think of Sankara, the champion of the Jnana cult. Again, the followers of Sankara denounce the Bhaktas as religious or mystical fanatics. To Vivekananda however, the two, viz., Jnana and Bhakti, are never inimical. "There is no difference between the supreme Bhakti and the supreme Jnana. The supreme Bhakti is to realise God as the form of Prema (Love) itself. If you see the loving form of God manifested everywhere and in everything, how can you hate or injure others? That realisation of Love can never come so long as there is the least desire in the heart, or what Sri Ramakrishna used to say, attachment for Kama-Kanchana (Sense-pleasure and wealth). In the perfect realisation of Love, even the consciousness of one's own body does not exist. Also the supreme Jnana is to realise the oneness everywhere, to see one's own self as the self in everything. That too cannot come so long as there is the least consciousness of the ego (Aham)."[1]

In his Guru Vivekananda saw the principle of service to humanity. He interpreted the teachings of Paramahansadeva as renunciation and service. How can renunciation and service be held together as an ideal? Are they not to some extent incongruous? It was left to the Swami to prove that the two are not conflicting ideas. It was he who materialised

[1] *Talks with Swami Vivekananda*, p. 179.

the abstract teachings of his Guru through the establishment of the institution, known as the Ramakrishna Mission. Its main aim is renunciation and service.

The main objects and principles of the Ramakrishna Mission as originally drawn up are the following:

> "This Association (Sangha) shall be known as Ramakrishna Mission. The aim of the Sangha is to preach those truths which Sri Ramakrishna has, for the good of humanity, preached and demonstrated by practical application in his own life, and to help others to put these truths into practice in their lives for their temporal, mental and spiritual advancement."

Its methods of action are:

> "(a) to train men so as to make them competent to teach such knowledge or sciences as are conducive to the material and spiritual welfare of the masses.
>
> (b) to promote and encourage arts and industries and to introduce and spread among the people in general Vedantic and other religious ideas in the way in which they were elucidated in the life of Sri Ramakrishna."[1]

The Swami emphasised the need and value of social service. By serving man one serves Divinity. "Work, my children, work with your whole heart. Mind not the fruits of work." The Ramakrishna Mission's traditions of social service and relief work

[1] *The Life of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol II, pp. 609-10.

are a fulfilment of the commandments of its great founder.

Renunciation, disinterested action and the Vedantic religion with its mottos of oneness, strength and freedom of soul are the legacies of the Swami. When we know that we are souls, we are free. To-day we fight for our material 'I's and 'Me's. Let us try to free our souls which are enchained by the 'I's and 'Me's. The soul is free and immortal. Let us realise this truth and in the light of the realisation all our miseries and sufferings will end.

SWAMI DAYANANDA [1]

When Keshab was westernising the Brahmo religion, voices of protest arose all over India. Dayananda's was one such, in favour of the Vedas and the Vedic way of life. Dayananda spent his life in reviving the Vedic discipline. To this effect he founded the Arya Samaj for preaching the Vedic religion. Rammohun had been charmed by the culture and philosophy of the Upanishads; to Vivekananda, the Vedanta appealed most. But Dayananda went to the very fountainhead of all such inspiration, the Vedas. And what an infinite mine of scholarship, tradition, law, philosophy and religion did he find in them!

[1] Dayananda's original name was Mulshankar. He was born in a rich Brahmin family of Kathiawar in the year 1824. When only eight years old, he was invested with the sacred thread. In 1837, during the Shivaratri vigil, he suddenly lost faith in idol-worship. He left home in his twenty-first year to gain true knowledge and yogic practices. He visited several places and gathered instructions from several Sadhus. A Deccani, Swami Purnanand by name gave him the name of Dayananda Saraswati. He also learnt yoga from Jwalanand Puri and Shivanand Giri. In 1860 he went to Muttra to read the sacred books with the intellectual giant, Swami Virjanand. "Finding in him a true Guru and guide, Swami Dayanand became his disciple and read with him for nearly four years, at the end of which he took leave of Swami Virjanand. Swami Virjanand charged Dayanand with the duty of devoting himself to the mission of uplifting the country, the rescue of the sacred books, the removal of sectarianism and finally the promulgation of Vedic religion throughout the world." (See *Dayanand Commemoration Volume*, edited by Harbilas Sarda p. xliv.). All through his life the Swami carried out the parting message of his Guru. He died in 1883.

Dayananda seized on the Vedas for his support and built on them a culture and a religion. But his interpretation of the Vedas has been questioned by many, who have blamed him for reading his own views into the Vedas. According to some, the Vedas are only the antique records of semi-barbarous worship, while according to others, they are merely the embodiments of ritualistic learning. But Dayananda looked upon the Vedas as real scriptures. For him, they contained the Divine Word. "In the matter of Vedic interpretation I am convinced," says Sri Aurobindo, "that whatever may be the final complete interpretation, Dayananda will be honoured as the first discoverer of the right clues. Amidst the chaos and obscurity of old ignorance and age-long misunderstanding his was the eye of direct vision that pierced to the truth and fastened on that which was essential. He has found the keys of the doors that time had closed and rent asunder the seals of the imprisoned fountains."[1]

Dayananda's interpretation of the Vedas was based on *Nirukta*. Yaska, the author of this work is one of earliest authorities on Vedic interpretations. Long before Sayana and Mahidhar, the Nairuktik interpretation held the ground. But later on Sayana and Mahidhar founded the mythological school which superseded the etymological school based on Nirukta. But Dayananda stood by the Nirukta school and declared the Vedas to be monotheistic.

Dayananda "asserts that the religion of the Vedas is monotheism pure and simple—the exclusive worship

[1] Sri Aurobindo, *Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda*, p. 71.

of one true God and of Him only. There are thirty-three gods mentioned in the Vedas, but they are merely the forces of nature that serve us everyday; He whom we have to serve and worship is the Supreme Soul of the universe."[1] In his *Introduction to the commentary on the Vedas*, Dayananda has quoted profusely from the Vedas to show that their teachings are in complete accord with modern science, and that many scientific truths which were not known in Europe until a century or two ago are mentioned or hinted at in the Vedas.[1]

Are the Vedas 'revealed'? The Swami's answer is in the affirmative. The Atharva Veda says: "Who is that Great Being who revealed the Rig, the Yajur, the Sama and the Atharva Veda ? He is the Supreme Spirit who has created the universe and sustains it." Again, says the Yajur Veda: "The Great Ruler of the universe, who is self-existent, all-pervading, holy, eternal and formless has been eternally instructing his subjects—the immortal souls—in all kinds of knowledge, for their good, through the Veda."

Dayananda was filled with pain and bitterness at the behaviour of the priestly class who cramped and dwarfed Hindu society by countenancing evil practices and immoral sanctions in the name of religion. The priests had strangled Hindu life by their fanaticism and bigotry. Dayananda took upon himself the task of rejuvenating the dying religion. His first crusade was against idolatry.

[1] *Swami Dayananda Saraswati*, (Dayananda Birth Centenary Edition) p. 69 (Arya Samaj, Calicut).

[2] See *Dayanand Commemoration Volume*, pp. 203-204.

The Vedas did not sanction idolatry. "There is not a single word in the Veda to support idol worship and the belief that God can be summoned and bidden to depart (at the will of the devotee). On the other hand, idolatry is condemned. In the Yajur Veda it is said that "they are enveloped in darkness who worship Prakriti—matter in place of the all-pervading God: but those who worship things born of Prakriti (earth, trees etc.) are sunk in still greater darkness."[1]

Dayananda did not believe in polytheism. *Satyarth Prakash* opens with a chapter on the names of God. God is one but the wise call Him by different names, such as Indra, Mitra Varuna, Agni and so on. His names are innumerable because His natures and activities are infinite. But He is One, Non-dual. Quoting the Yajur Veda he says that God never takes on a human form. To worship the Absolute is the summum bonum of a man's life. The Swami says: "Wash away the impurities of the body and mind. Worship the ultimate Deity with love and devotion."

In his metaphysical views, Dayananda was influenced by the Sankhya system of philosophy. The One and Infinite God evolves out of Prakriti the cosmos. Prakriti is uncreated and imperishable. Again, the Swami believed in the eternity of many souls. The souls are wrapped up in Prakriti but God is above it. Prakriti has three qualities, viz., Satva, Rajas and Tamas. "That condition of matter in which the intellect-promoting (Satva), passion-exciting (Rajas) and stupidity-producing (Tamas) qualities are found combined in

[1] *Swami Dayanand Sarasvati*, by Kulyar, p. 220.

equal proportions is called Prakriti."[1]

The qualities of God, according to Dayananda, are eternal knowledge, eternal bliss, omnipotence etc. The soul has such qualities as desire, repulsion, activity, feelings of pleasure and pain, expiration, nictitation, organic growth, discernment, memory, individuality, movement, regulation of the senses etc.[2] His metaphysics was a curious amalgam of Sankhya and Advaitavad. Sankhya believes in two principles but Dayananda recognised three, viz., Purusha, Prakriti and God. Again, as a monist, he would insist on non-dualism, as fundamental to his thinking. So far as the course of evolution is concerned, his views were more or less the Sankhya views. According to *Satyarth Prakash*, the first principle that is produced out of the highly subtle elementary Prakriti is called Mahatatva—the principle of wisdom—which is one degree less subtle than the Prakriti. Out of Mahatatva is evolved Ahankara—the principle of individuality—which is still less subtle and in its turn gives rise to the five subtle principles of action and the principle of attention, which are all a little less subtle than the principle of individuality. The five subtle Bhuts, by passing through various stages of less subtle conditions of matter, are finally transformed into five least subtle states of matter, such as solids, liquids etc.[3]

If the Purusha (soul) and the Prakriti are eternal, why should God have any control over them? "Just

[1] See *Satyarth Prakash*, Ch. VIII (Translated by Dr. C. Bharadwaja, 1915).

[2] See *Satyarth Prakash*, ch. vii.

[3] See *Ibid.*, ch. viii.

as a King and his subjects live contemporaneously and yet they are subject to him, so are the soul and Prakriti under the control of God. Why should not the soul with its finite powers and the dead inert matter be subject to His powers when He creates the whole universe, awards souls the fruits of their deeds, protects and sustains all, and possesses infinite powers?"[1]

As to the question of bondage and emancipation, the Swami says that emancipation is the condition in which the souls are freed from pain and misery. The free souls attain happiness and live in God. How can emancipation be secured? "The practice of yoga, study and tuition or instruction of others and the advancement of knowledge by righteous efforts, the employment of best means towards the accomplishment of one's object, the regulation of one's conduct in strict accordance with the dictates of even-handed justice which is righteousness, and so on, are the means of obtaining emancipation."[2]

The freed soul retains its individuality in God. A Vedantin believes that the soul, when emancipated, is absorbed into Brahman but Dayananda does not agree to it. In his opinion, the soul enjoys happiness in emancipation and as such it cannot be lost in the Absolute. The emancipated soul may again come to this world. "It is the Supreme Being who helps us to enjoy the bliss of emancipation and then brings us back into this world and clothes us with bodies."[3]

In Dayananda's time the educated people, trained

[1] *Ibid.*, ch. viii.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. ix.
[3] See *Satyarth Prakash*, ch. ix.

and dazzled by western education, had begun to decry the religious and social evils of India. But the Swami did not take the help of western culture to denounce these evils. He saw the evils with the eye of the Vedas and he sought remedies in the Vedic way. Thus writes a contributor to the *Dayanand Commemoration Volume:* "I remember him (Dayananda) thundering against the demoralizing effect of the child-marriage, the extravagance of marriage expenses, the insanity of postmortem feasts, Purdah system, denial of female education, idolatry, superstition, caste, untouchability and all the cramping customs, laws, usages and beliefs, which have made Hindu life one life-long repression, a galling yoke, a slavery of the most unmanly soul-oppressing type."[1] The Caste System had become a rigid custom during the Swami's time. The privileged classes had no intermarriage or interdining with the depressed or backward classes. But the Swami denounced these social restrictions. He was truly a social democrat and this is why he shifted emphasis from birth to worth as determined by merits. The old Varnasrama Dharma did not classify people according to their accidental birth. People should be classified into groups according to their qualification and disposition. The Swami stood against untouchability. Many Hindu untouchables were being converted to other religions and Dayananda by means of Suddhi reconverted them to the Arya Dharma. His Arya Samaj embraced all, high or low, privileged or depressed, touchables or untouchables. Mahatma Gandhi writes of Dayananda: "Among the many rich legacies that

[1] P. 116.

Swami Dayananda has left to us, his unequivocal pronouncement against untouchability is undoubtedly one."[1]

We have mentioned earlier that he founded the Arya Samaj whose main principles, as they stand to-day, are the following:—

> God is Truth, Knowledge and Bliss. He alone is entitled to be worshipped.
>
> The Veda is the book of true knowledge. It is the first duty of every Arya to read it and to teach it to others; to hear it and to preach it.
>
> The primary object of the Arya Samaj is to do good to the world by improving the physical, spiritual and social condition of all mankind.
>
> We should promote knowledge and dispel ignorance.
>
> No one should be contented with his own welfare. On the contrary, he should look for his welfare in the welfare of others.[2]

Like Keshab and Swami Vivekananda, Dayananda too laid emphasis on social service. The Arya Samaj has been, directly or indirectly, one of the motive forces in bringing about the social consciousness which has revolutionised India in recent years. To propagate true Vedic knowledge and culture the Arya Samaj has founded Colleges, Gurukulas and educational institutions for girls. Besides these, the Samaj has estab-

[1] See *Dayanand Commemoration Volume* (Edited by Har Bilas Sarda). Article by M. K. Gandhi.

[2] See *Swami Dayanand Saraswati*, by S. P. Kulyar, pp. 149-51.

lished orphanages and systematically fought against the Purdah System and untouchability.

In conclusion we shall say that Dayananda was a Vedic Rishi and wanted all India to act up to the Vedic ideals. *Satyarth Prakash* contains the main Vedic ideals and practices as he understood them. The Swami emphasised Brahmacharya and the daily observance of Homa, Sandhya and the recital of the Gayatree Mantra. He wanted every Arya to culture Tapas, Satya, Brahma, Diksha and Yajna. These five "entered into him as the basic atoms of his mighty being. His Brahmacharya was an expression of his Tapas, his devotion to veda of his Brahma, his rationalism of his Satya, his life-long consecrated services to society and nation of his Diksha and his complete renunciation of material gain for the sake of the spirit was an expression of his Yajna."[1]

[1] See *Dayanand Commemoration Volume*, p. 248 (Edited by Har Bilas Sarda).

RABINDRANATH [1]

How differently has the Indian lore been interpreted by contemporary thinkers! Here is Rabindranath, the angel-poet who sang the psalm of love and dreamt of the Religion of Man.

Though essentially a poet, Tagore's work is so deeply coloured with metaphysical notions that it must provide a happy hunting ground for the philosophic critic. True, his philosophy is, "a sigh of the soul rather than a reasoned account of metaphysics; an atmosphere rather than a system of philosophy."[2] Rabindraphilosophy is an artist's creation and as such it is to be understood as a flower is understood.

Rabindranath's philosophy largely centres round the eternal query—What is the relation of the finite with the Infinite? In *Jivansmriti*[3] the poet writes: "Meseems, there is only one grand tune of all my compositions and it may conveniently be styled as the union of the Infinite with the finite in finiteness." The tune

[1] He was the worthy son of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, the founder of the Brahma Dharma. He was born in the year 1861 at Calcutta. The Maharshi reared him up in a religious environment. Boy Rabindranath was precocious and began writing poetry at the early age of thirteen. For full sixty-seven years of his crowded life, numerous poems, dramas, discussions, songs and essays of various descriptions flowed from his pen. He died in the year 1941.

(For a fuller exposition of Rabindranath's philosophy, see Author's *The Philosophy of Rabindranath* (Hind Kitabs Ltd.)

[2] Radhakrishnan, *Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 6.

[3] *Jivansmriti*, p. 249 (1st Ed.) (It is in Bengali).

starts right from *Prakritir Pratisodh*,[1] a play written as early as 1884. His answers to the above query fall under two distinct categories. As a Vedantin of the Sankara school he extols the Absolute, disregarding the claims of finite individuals. Again as a Vedantin of the Ramanuja school and even more as a follower of the Bhakti cult or Vaishnavism, he weaves a firm organic relation between the Absolute and the finites. But he never accepted maya as an adequate explanation of the world. In fact on many occasions he has protested against it. "Coming to the theatre of life we foolishly sit with our back to the stage. We see the gilded pillars and decorations, we watch the coming and going of the crowd; and when the light is put out at the end, we ask ourselves in bewilderment, what is the meaning of it all? If we paid attention to the inner stage, we could witness the eternal love-drama of the soul and be assured that it has pauses but no end, and that the gorgeous world-preparations are not a magnificent delirium of things."[2] In the second volume of *Santiniketan* he raises the query—Is it maya that has compelled Brahman to express Himself? And he answers: "There is no maya. His manifestation is in Anandam or bliss and bliss is His only manifestation."[3] What, then, is the real teaching of Rabindranath? Is he a pure monist or a qualified monist, a Sankarite or a Vaishnavite? In his addresses in the Mandir[4], he shows himself as an ardent follower of Sankara. He asserts: "Yes, I shall become Brahman. I cannot

[1] See *Sacrifice and other Plays*. (Translated as The Ascetic).
[2] *Thoughts from Tagore*, p. 29
[3] See *Santiniketan*, Vol. II, p. 339.
[4] Place where Divine Service is held.

think of any other idea but this. I will definitely say, I will become the Infinite.... The river says, I shall become the sea. This is not her audacity but truth and hence humility. And this is why she aspires after an union with the sea."[1] Again, in *Sadhana:* "Yes, we must become Brahman. We must not shrink from avowing this. Our existence is meaningless if we never can expect to realise the highest perfection that there is. If we have an aim and yet can never reach it, then it is no aim at all."[2] Here we have the true Advaita note. The quintessence of Sankara's teaching also is—I shall become Brahman for I am He. The diversities that we see around us are only phenomenal. Ontologically, there is only the Brahman.

According to the poet, Reality is one. Monism is the keyword with the poet and all through his writings are strewn the Upanishadic texts that declare the oneness of the ultimate Reality. Nowhere in his works does he favour dualism or pluralism. At places he is chary of describing the Absolute. The Absolute, according to Sankara, cannot be described for it is beyond words and logic. Tagore also sings of the Absolute as "the inscrutable without name and form."[3] Also, "There where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flights in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form, nor colour and never, never a word."[4] In one of the poems in *Utsarga*, he introduces the idea

[1] *Santiniketan*, Vol. II, p. 336. (in Bengali).
[2] *Sadhana*, p. 155.
[3] Eng. *Gitanjali*, No. 95
[4] *Ibid.*, No. 67

of Anirvacaniya or the inexplicable. Here the poet says that the Absolute is formless but it manifests itself in forms. We cannot say how it is possible. We cannot say that we know the Absolute nor can we say that we do not know it. The Absolute is inexplicable.[1]

But there is another side to his teachings. As one in sympathy with the Vaishnava or Bhakti cult, he believes in what might be called qualified monism. According to this idea the finites are not mere passing phenomena. They contribute their share to the ultimate Reality. The Absolute needs the finites and needs them most. Without the finites, the eternal love-drama is at an end.

> "O! Thou Lord of all Heavens, where would be thy love if I were not."[2]

In Fruit Gathering:

> "I came and you woke and the skies blossomed with lights........
> Yet I know the endless thirst in your heart for sight
> of me, the thirst that cries at my door in the repeated knockings of sunrise."[3]

Tagore tends to look upon the ultimate Reality as Mind. This Infinite Mind is the creator and we are the finite representations of this Infinite Mind. My mind is not separate from yours. Had it been so, no communication between mind and mind would be pos-

[1] See *Rabi Rasmi*, Vol. II, p. 37.
[2] *Gitanjali*, No. 56.
[3] No. LXXX.

sible. My mind is universal and though it is circumscribed by ego and matter it is not thereby set apart.[1] Tagore explains the Hindu Gayatree Mantra thus: "Let me contemplate the adorable splendour of Him who created the earth, the air, and the starry spheres and sends the power of comprehension within our minds."[2] The same Reason which is permeating Nature is also in man, the finite individual, and this is why it is possible for men to understand Nature. The external Nature and man's reason are the expressions of the supreme Reason.

At the same time Rabindranath describes the Absolute as lover, which, again, is a purely Vaishnava ideal. The philosophy of Vaishnavism lays emphasis on the intimate relation between God and man. The Vaishnavas say that God is *Rasa* and this is why though one He becomes many. He creates man for He plays with him the game of love. The Infinite gladly allows itself to be caught in the snares of the finite. Our poet mingles his tune with the Vaishnavas when he says—There is One and the One says, I shall become many. The One wanted to enjoy its unity in diversity, so the creation began[3]—The Vaishnavas say, God is eternal, man is eternal and so is love. In *Anantaprem*, (*Manasi*), the poet expresses how the lover and the beloved have been loving each other through eternity. At every birth this love-drama is enacted anew. The heart of Vaishnavism lies in Viraha or separation. The Supreme Lord has drawn a veil between man and Himself

[1] See *Sanchaya*, p. 122.
[2] *The Religion of Man*, p. 93.
[3] See *Sahityatatva* by Rabindranath. Prabasi (Vaisak, 1341).

so that He may know the pangs of separation. There is an eternal thirst in Him for the finite's company.

> "Day after day you buy your sunrise from my heart, and you find your love carven into the image of my life."[1]

The eternal love-drama between the Deity and the devotee has been well-described by the poet in his idea of Jivandevata. The poet as a devotee feels that he is being led by his Deity along the path of life and death. The relation between the two is most intimate and it is love. Even in *Nabajataka*, written as late as 1940, the poet cannot help speaking to the Deity of his life. "My play in this world-house comes to an end and now comes the time when the door of the house shall be closed. O, the innermost spirit of my life! Come now by my side. Give me the peace of your company at the end of my journey."[2]

We have seen two different and distinct trends of Rabindranath's philosophy. Which of these is the poet's preference? There are some who think that in his explanation of the Upanishads Tagore writes in the vein of absolutism but in fact he believes in concrete idealism. But this is not convincing for the Upanishads can be explained in both ways. It cannot be denied that at certain moments the poet's mind has been seized by the supreme glory of the Absolute. Borne by such feelings, he has occasionally minimised the worth of the finites of the world. But again in the lyrics, in his conception of Jivandevata, he believes in

[1] *Fruit Gathering*, No. LXXVII.
[2] Tr. fro: Bengali.

an abiding relation between the Infinite and the finites. Nowhere in his writings do we come across a reasoned reconciliation of these distinct views. Can it be suggested that the poet is torn between the two possibilities and cannot decide between them? This again is unwarranted for quite a large number of his lyrics speak of concrete idealism. On the whole the poet shows a bias for idealism of the concrete variety.

The Jivandevata or the Absolute is Satyam (truth), Sivam(goodness) and Sundaram (beauty). The Jivandevata is not a barren, static Reality. On the other hand, He is highly dynamic. In *Balaka* the poet interrogates the moving river on change: "You move on, move on, move in speed. You fly undaunted and seldom do you look back."[1] The life-process is moving endlessly in an infinite pursuit. Referring to Hansa balaka the poet remarks, the life-process of the cosmos has heard the singular voice which is—not here, not here, but somewhere else. This is why we find life around us to be dynamic and progressing. But change is not the last word of Rabindra-philosophy. The Absolute, according to the poet, contains changes but does not Himself change. He is changeless but His expressions are in change and movement.

If the ultimate Reality be Sivam, how can there be evil in it? How can we explain the evils and sufferings of the world? According to Rabindranath, "the question why there is evil in existence is the same as why there is imperfection or in other words why there is creation at all?"[2] The questions of evil and finite-

[1] Tr. fro: Bengali.
[2] *Sadhana*, p. 47.

ness are thus intertwined. Evil or pain there is in the universe and nobody can deny it. But the question is: Is it final? Our poet says: "Pain which is the feeling of our finiteness, is not a fixture in our life. It is not an end in itself, as joy is. To meet with it is to know that it has no part in the true permanence of creation."[1] The Absolute, according to him, owns the finites of the world but does it not on that account own the imperfections and evils that beset finiteness? Somehow his Absolute does not own the evils of the finite and phenomenal world. Is evil then an illusion? Is it due to maya? It is hard to reconcile the poet's Absolute with the existence of evil in the finite-realm.

How to tackle and transform evil and suffering? The poet says, evil can be made to grow into good. To conquer evil and suffering one has to cultivate goodness. What is goodness? "My answer is that when a man begins to have an extended vision of his true self, when he realises that he is much more than at present he seems to be, he begins to get conscious of his moral nature. Then he grows aware of that which he is yet to be, and the state not yet experienced by him becomes more real than that under his direct experience. Necessarily, his perspective of life changes, and his will takes the place of his wishes. For will is the supreme wish of the larger life, the life whose greater portion is out of our present reach, whose objects are not for the most part before our sight. Then comes the conflict of our lesser man with our greater man, of our wishes with our will, of the desires

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 48

for things affecting our senses with the purpose that is within our heart. Then we begin to distinguish between what we immediately desire and what is good. For good is that which is desirable for our greater self."[1] Evil and suffering will be conquered when the finite individual sees himself in the Great or in other words, lives the life of goodness.

When evils beset us, the poet tells us not to lose heart in cowardice. Come what may, moor in your own self. Evils and pains shall come and shake the very foundations of life but never, never lose confidence—.[2] In the dark gloomy days of pain and sorrow the poet's prayer is,

> "Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers
> but to be fearless in facing them.
> Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain
> but for the heart to conquer it."[3]

The finite soul lives in this world of pain and evil and tries to conquer them by leading a life of goodness. But what is the ultimate destiny of the finite individual? Can he realise the Infinite, and if so, in what form does the realisation take place? Rabindranath's answers to these problems are clear and definite. For him, pain and evil are not the final state of things. Through death soulhood is sure to win and pass into a state of

[1] *Sadhana*, p. 54.
[2] Tr. from Bengali.

"नाना दुःखे चित्तेर विक्षेपे
याहादेर जीवनेर भित्ति याय वारंवार कँपे।
यारा अन्यमना तारा शोनो,
आपनारे भुलोना कखनो॥" जन्मदिने।

[3] *Fruit Gathering*, No. LXXIX.

fuller perfection. Death, according to him, is not a negative principle. Again, life is not the opposite of death or alien to it. On the other hand, one is the complement of the other.

In *Gitanjali*

> "O, Thou the last fulfilment of life, Death, my death,
> Come and whisper to me!
> Day after day have I kept watch for thee;
> For thee have I borne the joys and pangs of life.
> All that I am, that I have, that I hope
> And all my love have ever flowed towards thee
> In depth of secrecy. One final glance from thine
> eyes and my life will be ever thine own.
>
> The flowers have been woven and the garland is ready for the bridegroom. After the wedding the bride shall leave her home and meet her lord alone in the solitude of night."[1]

The drama *Phalguni*[2] embodies admirably his ideas on death and old age. The young and the green chase the old, the grey. But who is old and where is age? The old when caught becomes new again. The underlying principle of the cosmos is an eternal newness, a world of freshness without end. It is a movement which gathers up the past, present and future in itself but confines itself to none. In this drama the poet has emphasised the idea that if you try to arrest death, you miss it and get only life. But if you try to welcome it, you have it as the fulfilment of life itself.

[1] Eng. *Gitanjali*, No. 91.
[2] Translated as *Cycle of Spring*.

Thus, for Rabindranath, death opens up a vista of a new life. But is the next life final? Is death no longer there? In other words, does the poet believe in perfection or perfectivity? The next life cannot be a life of perfection for had it been so, the finite order would have come to a standstill. He believes in death as the gateway leading finite beings to newer lives. If the finite attains complete perfection, he becomes one with the Infinite. How then, if the unity is once achieved can the love-drama between the finite and the Infinite continue? The Vaishnava trend of thought leads Rabindranath, to ascribe to the finite not perfection but perfectivity. Through the portals of every death, the finite becomes more and more perfect.

Perfection is in realisation and the realisation of the Infinite is possible only through love. The Deity creates out of Himself the devotee so that the love-relation may continue. "Thou settest a barrier in thine own being and then callest thy severed self in myriad notes. This thy self-separation has taken body in me."[1] The poet feels that his salvation lies in loving the Infinite. Sometimes as the lover and sometimes as the beloved, he offers his love to God. "Let thy love play upon my voice and rest on my silence. Let it pass through my heart into all my movements. Let thy love like stars shine in the darkness of my sleep and dawn in my awakening. Let it burn in the flame of my desires. And flow in all currents of my own love."[2] And finally at the end of life he returns all the love to God.

[1] Eng. *Gitanjali*, No. 71.
[2] *Lover's Gift and Crossing*, *Crossing* No. 55.

"Let me carry thy love in my life as a harp
does its music, and give it back to thee at last
with my life."[1]

Is love simply a feeling and does it negate action? According to Tagore, it is both a feeling and an action. Action plays an important rôle in Tagore's philosophy. To work for love is freedom in action. We are free so long as we work out of love and for love alone. To love is to be free from the ego. It is the Aham or ego which blurs the human vision and makes us narrow. Hence the poet's prayer is—Sink all my egoism in tears.—[2]

Rabindranath may not be a man of religion in the sense the word is generally understood. But his religious effort, evolution and achievement demand serious consideration. Briefly put, he begins his life as a Brahmo, takes up for a while a synthetic religion and ultimately reaches the Religion of Man. As a Brahmo, he fights against the practice of idolatry in Hinduism. In *Sanchaya*[3] the poet writes: When we use our religion, we often defile it by our own pettinesses. We talk big of the universality of religion but in practice, we narrow it down to the scope of our own sects. Like other material possessions, religion also becomes the target of our vanity and sectarianism. We set religion against religion in a spirit of ugly competition, make them run a race in order to determine the winner. We forget that these are due to the inherent vices of our

[1] *Lover's Gift and Crossing, Crossing* No. 55.

[2] "सकल अहंकार हे आमार
डुवाओ चोखेर जले"—गीताञ्जलि

[3] Tr. fro: Bengali. See article on Dharmer Nabayug.

own nature and shamelessly enough, we attribute them to religions themselves.

Rabindranath considers idol-worship unnatural. In an article, *Sakar O Nirakar*, he gives reasons to justify his opinion.[1] If we create images to stimulate our imagination and concentrate all our attention on them, we find, to our disappointment, that in the long run the images become not means but ends in themselves. Idols are to be taken as means but once we accept idol-worship, we are hypnotized by it. Again, idols are to actuate our imagination but the Infinite is never an object of imagination. The Infinite is an easy, natural and true knowledge. Why should we take the pains of knowing the Infinite through an unnatural medium of imagination?

But about his fiftieth year, a change came upon him and his protests against orthodox Hinduism mellowed considerably. He no longer fights against Hinduism. On the other hand, he is willing to incorporate the best of Hinduism into Brahmoism. What he now supports is neither orthodox Hinduism nor Brahmoism but a Synthetic Religion. In the drama, *Achalayatan*, the poet preaches the gospel of the synthesis. Everything in the universe moves on. That what is seemingly stagnant is sure to acquire the force of mobility. Indian religious systems have been so conservative in outlook that they have become motionless and dead. The protagonists are two brothers, Panchaka and Mahapanchaka. Mahapanchaka is the upholder of conservatism while Panchaka is out for a revolution and change. There comes the Guru and the tyranny of

[1] See *Bharati*, 1292 (Sravan).

orthodoxy ends. It seems that Panchaka has won b, the poet has not denied the values of orthodoxy. Th what is noble in the old school is always welcome t the poet. He is at once the synthesis of Panchaka anc Mahapanchaka, the new and the old.

Belief in the Synthetic Religion too was, however a temporary attitude of the poet's mind. He soor rises above this attitude. His mind is now caught by the idea of the Religion of Man. Through diverse poems, essays and dramas he had been hinting at this new religion but a complete theory is finally woven in his Hibbert Lectures. In such dramas as *Prakritir Pratisodh* or *Maline* we have early glimpses of the Religion of man. In the essay, *Dharmaprachar* the poet gives us a clear idea of it. He writes, Brahman or ultimate Reality can be perceived only through the human personality. We can know Him and please Him only in and through this medium. In this world, our actions amidst human surroundings are the best prayers to the Almighty. We care for human personality and human personality is Divine personality.

The idea of the humanity of God or the Divin of man is the heart of the Religion of Man. Ma not insignificant; for he is the representative of or universal Spirit. This is why it has been poss for man to realise in his spirit a union with Him. I poem, *Vaishnava Kavita* in *Sonar Tari*, the poet refers to the same idea. The God in man is the man in God. Life achieves the bliss of fulness when the two come in union with each other. The poet says—Whatever I can offer to God, I offer to man and to God I give

whatever I can give to man. I make God man and man God.[1]

Rabindranath will always be remembered as a poet-prophet of integral humanism. He is a philosopher whose main interest centres round man.

[1] See Vaishnava Kavita.

GANDHI[1]

After Rabindranath we shall have two more famous thinkers to study. One is Gandhi and the other is Sri Aurobindo. In the application of ideas to life few have been so thoroughgoing as Gandhi. His metaphysics is almost nil but his ethical piety is immense.

Gandhian philosophy can be summed up in one word, viz., Truth. All his life has been, in his own words, an Experiment with Truth. For him, religion, ethics and politics move together. He seeks truth from religious, ethical and political viewpoints and finds it to be identical with love and non-injury. The key to Gandhiji's life and philosophy is religion. His religion is Hinduism and he describes himself a Sanatani Hindu. A Sanatani is an 'orthodox' but Gandhi's orthodoxy is in so many ways unorthodox. As we proceed we shall have occasion to learn the main tenets of his Sanatani Hinduism. Gandhi's ultimate aim is to lift every man to an ethical and spiritual plane. Hi gospel of Satyagraha, an application of the ancient

[1] M. K. Gandhi was born at Kathiawar in the yea His mother was a pious Hindu lady from whom the boy Ga gained his own religious nature. He went to England to quali for the Bar and was admitted to the Bar in South Africa. H rose in his profession to eminence. During the heyday of h life, he suddenly abandoned everything and gave himself up a life of self-control and non-violence. Through inner disciplir and self-purification Gandhi has to-day reached the high ethic plane. He is a saint, a noble figure and also a lovable huma being. Mrs. M. G. Polak, in her book, *Mr. Gandhi : the Ma* has rightly portrayed him as most human.

trine of Ahimsa to everyday life, including social and political action, shows the practical bent of his genius. He is a true Hindu and by "his ascetic habits, his fasts and penances and his life of renunciation he has upheld the ancient Hindu ideals of Brahmacharya, Tapasya and Vairagya in the modern world in which there is so much to corrupt every sense."[1] To-day Gandhi points the way to a new Hinduism which will be worthy of its splendid past. He is reinterpreting Hinduism in an original way to suit modern conditions. He stands for Hinduism but he does not think of Hinduising the rest of the world. He does not dream of a world-religion. He likes the different religions to exist side by side. "I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world, I believe that they are all God-given, and I believe that they are necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that, if only we could all of us read the scriptures of the different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths, we should find that they were at bottom all one and were all helpful to one another."[2] He is against all acts of proselytizing. He tells the missionaries: "If instead of confining themselves purely to humanitarian work such as education, medical services to the poor and the like, they (the missionaries) would use these activities of theirs for the purpose of proselytizing, I would certainly like them to withdraw. Every nation considers its own faith to be as good as that of any other."[3]

[1] *The Gandhi Sutras*, by D. S. Sarma, p. xiv.
[2] *Harijan*, Feb. 10, 1934.
[3] *Young India*, April 23, 1931.

Like Devendranath, Gandhi too was very much impressed by the famous sloka of the Upanishad. "Whatever there is in this universe is pervaded by God" The sloka implies complete surrender to God. Apropos Gandhi says: "This Mantra tells me that I cannot hold as mine anything that belongs to God and if my life and that of all who believe in this Mantra has to be a life of perfect dedication, it follows that it will have to be a life of continual service of our fellow creatures."[1]

God is Satya or Truth. Where there is truth, there is pure knowledge and where there is pure knowledge, there is bliss. God is Sat-chit-ananda or Truth-knowledge-bliss. Realisation or Moksha lies in finding the truth. "To find truth completely is to realise oneself and one's destiny, i.e., to become perfect."[2] Gandhi reiterates this worship of truth, in thought, speech and action. How to realise the truth? He by his own life has shown mankind one grand way of realising it. It is Satyagraha. Satyagraha or the holding on to truth is a faultless philosophy. For Gandhi non-violence and truth go together. But non-violence is a means and truth the end. Truth-seeking is possible only when the individual imbibes the faith of Ahimsa or non-violence. Nature seems to be red in tooth and claw. But is not man higher than Nature? Man has a Divine mission to fulfil and the mission is Ahimsa. "Ahimsa or non-violence is abstention from causing pain to any creature either in its mind or body."[3] But non-violence is not mere not-killing. Every act

[1] *Harijan*, Jan, 30, 1937.
[2] *Young India*, Nov. 17, 1921.
[3] *Gandhi Sutras*, p. 15.

of injury to a living creature is a breach of Ahimsa. Gandhi's concept of Ahimsa is very wide. We can at best describe its scope by the following anecdote. "When the Collector of Champaran wrote to him a stiff letter which he later decided to withdraw and asked for its return, and when the young followers of Gandhi began to copy it, Gandhi admonished them and said that if they kept a copy, the letter could not be said to have been withdrawn."[1] To keep a copy of the letter that is withdrawn is to harbour ill-feeling in the breast and that is decidedly an act of violence or Himsa.

Non-violence implies love to all animals. The protection of the cow is an important feature of his Sanatani religion. He says, "For me the cow is the purest type of sub-human life. She pleads before us on behalf of the whole of the sub-human species for justice to it at the hands of man, the first among all that lives."[2] Cow-protection is the gift of Hinduism to the world. It symbolises the protection of the whole dumb creation of God.

Non-violence means love and brotherhood. This love shatters all barriers of caste. There is no place in his religion for untouchability. As a true Vaishnava he extends his love to all, to all men, birds, beasts and the rest of creation. All his life he has been fighting against untouchability. He calls the untouchables Harijans or men of God. He is hopeful about the eradication of untouchability. But in his reform, he believes in inner purification and internal sanction. "The re-

[1] *Gandhi and Gandhism*, by B. P. Sitaramayya, p. 98.
[2] *Young India*, June 26, 1924.

moval of untouchability is not to be brought about by any legal enactment. It will only be brought about when the Hindu conscience is roused to action and of its own accord removes the shame. It is a duty the touchables owe to the untouchables."[1]

Is it possible for men to be perfectly non-violent? Gandhi is fully aware of the weaknesses of the flesh. Non-violence is a soul-force but the soul is so often cramped by the machinations of the flesh. Himsa or Violence is a necessity for life in the body. "That is why a votary of Ahimsa always prays for ultimate deliverance from the bondage of the flesh."[2] But even in this bodily life, one can to a great extent, be non-violent. This is Gandhi's ideal, one of the peaks of his Sadhana.

Ahimsa is not cowardice. On the contrary, in it lies strength. It is also the extreme limit of forgiveness. Forgiveness is meaningless when it proceeds from a helpless creature. Ahimsa is forgiveness that springs from the fulness of strength and power.

A Satyagrahi will practise Brahmacharyya, for his salvation lies through chastity. "Brahmacharyya does not mean mere physical self-control. It means much more. It means complete control over all the senses. Thus an impure thought is a breach of Brahmacharyya, so is anger. All power comes from the preservation and sublimation of the vitality that is responsible for creation of life. If the vitality is husbanded instead of being dissipated, it is transmuted into creative energy of the highest order. This vitality is con-

[1] *Young India*, June 30, 1927.
[2] *Ibid.*, Oct. 4, 1928.

tinuously and even unconsciously dissipated by evil or even rambling, disorderly, unwanted thoughts."[1] A seeker of truth must be a Brahmacharin. He cannot marry for marriage is an hindrance in the attainment of truth. The doubt arises, is Gandhi aiming at universal celibacy? "Absolute Brahmacharyya is the ideal state. If you dare not think of it, marry by all means, but even then live a life of self-control."[2]

Satyagraha employs two great techniques: fasting and voluntary poverty. Fasting is resorted to for self-purification. A Satyagrahi also undertakes fasts during periods of psychological tension, which he is unable to resolve. Whenever the march of events has proved too much for Gandhi, he has taken to fasting and praying. As to the tremendous power of prayer, Gandhi writes: "Prayer has saved my life. Without it I should have been a lunatic long ago. I have had my share of the bitterest public and private experiences. They threw me into temporary despair. If I was able to get rid of that despair, it was because of prayer."[3] He uses these as techniques for resistance against evil and for the heightening of moral energy. The process is simple and effective, but somewhat atavistic.

Possession is a crime, says Gandhi. A Satyagrahi must not possess anything. But this assertion must not be taken literally. A satyagrahi should be satisfied with the minimum necessities of life. As to food, drink, clothes and house, he should have the barest

[1] *Harijan*, July 23, 1938.
[2] *Ibid.*, Sept. 7, 1935.
[3] See *Gandhi and Gandhism*, pp. 227-228.

possible, the least with which he can do. This is the spirit of voluntary poverty as preached by Gandhi.

The philosophical implication of Satyagraha is that truth is an attitude of the spirit. The spirit never dies and Satyagraha is eternal. Gandhi has the firmest belief in the final success of Satyagraha. The spirit which is beyond space and time must triumph over the flesh. "Things of the spirit are a deeper truth or reality than things of space and time. Violence is a spatio-temporal affair......non-violence goes on the assumption of the profound reality or truth of ideals, of the spirit, of the spiritual unity of mankind, of eternity and eternal life."[1]

His Sanatana Dharma is characterised by four important beliefs. As a Sanatani, he believes in Hindu scriptures, Avatars and rebirth. Secondly, he believes in Varnashrama Dharma. Thirdly, he believes in cow-protection and lastly he does not disbelieve in idol-worship. Gandhi believes in the Vedas but does not acknowledge their exclusive Divinity. For him, the Bible, the Koran and the Zend Avesta are as much divinely inspired as the Vedas. He accepts the interpretations of the Vedas only when they do not go against reason or moral sense. As regards Varnashrama, much corruption and confusion have arisen to-day in Hindu society due to its wrong interpretation. He clarifies the issue thus: "Varnashrama does attach to birth. A man cannot change his Varna by choice. Not to abide by one's Varna is to disregard the law of heredity. The division however into innumerable

[1] See *Gandhi's Satyagraha or Non-violent Resistance*, by R. Gregg pp. 300, 301.

castes is an unwarranted liberty taken with the doctrine. The four divisions (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra) are all-sufficing. I do not believe that inter-dining or even inter-marriage necessarily deprives a man of his status that his birth has given him. The four divisions define a man's calling, they do not restrict or regulate social intercourse. The divisions define duties, they confer no privileges......Varnashrama is self-restraint and conservation and economy of energy."[1]

Image-worship has been the battle-cry for ages and people supporting it have been evenly matched against those who denounce it. Arguments and counter-arguments have deafened and cancelled each other. Sanatani Hindus regard image-worship as the core of their religion. Religious reformers such as Rammohun, Keshab, Devendranath and Dayananda have denounced it in unmistakable terms; in this they have been ably supported by numerous other iconoclasts. Ramakrishna and Vivekananda believed both in image-worship and the worship of the Formless. In this babel it would be interesting to know Gandhi's views on it. Gandhi as a Sanatani believes in idols and images of God. He says: "I do not disbelieve in idol-worship. An idol does not excite any feeling of veneration in me. But I think that idol-worship is a part of human nature. We hanker after symbolism. Why should one be more composed in a church than elsewhere? Images are an aid to worship. No Hindu considers an image to be God. I do not consider idol-worship a

[1] See Appendix, *The Gandhi Sutras.*

sin."[1] Gandhi supports idolatry in so far as it helps one to realise God.

A peculiar feature of Gandhi's religious-philosophy is the Swadeshi. No orthodox Hindu would hold Swadeshi to be an integral part of Hinduism. But truth as Gandhi understands it, permeates every sphere of life, politics, ethics, religion and science. As such Gandhi thinks that religion or philosophy divorced from politics would be incomplete. How can you separate one from the other when all of them are embodiments of the same truth? But what is Swadeshi? In Gandhi's words, "Swadeshi is that spirit within us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote Thus in the matter of religion, I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion—that is, the use of my immediate surroundings in religion. If I find my religion to be defective I should serve it by purging it of its defects. In the domain of politics I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. In the field of economics I should use only those things that are produced by my immediate neighbours, and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting."[2]

The introduction of Swadeshi into religion is due to Divine ordination—that is Gandhi's belief. For him, States, Religious Orders are all ordained by God. The best way to serve God is not to disregard them

[1] *The Unseen Power*, by M. K. Gandhi, edited by J. P. Chandar, p. 99.

[2] See *Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas*, by C. F. Andrews, p. 120.

but to accept and improve them. Swadeshi is a duty that has a religious sanction behind it.

Gandhi's ethical ideas are based on the Gita. The book has been his guide and he calls it his mother. He says: "Let the Gita be to you a mine of diamonds as it has been to me, let it be your constant guide and friend on life's way. Let it light your path and dignify your labour."[1] The supreme teaching of the Gita, according to Gandhi is Ahimsa. Desirelessness, renunciation and detachment are also some of the central teachings of the Gita. But none of them can be compatible with Himsa. Desirelessness or detachment is possible only through complete non-violence. Though the Gita starts against the background of war or Himsa, yet its real teaching, Gandhi says, is Ahimsa pure and simple. Most of the vows that he has taken on himself have come from the teachings of the Gita. Even his vow of Swadeshi has arisen, it seems, out of Gita's Swadharma, which is the performance of one's own duty. "It is better to die performing one's own duty or Swadharma but Paradharma or another's duty is fraught with danger. Interpreted in terms of one's physical environment, this gives us the law of Swadeshi. What the Gita says with regard to Swadharma equally applies to Swadeshi for Swadeshi is Swadharma applied to one's immediate environment."[2] Swadeshi is not antagonism, nor is it a cult of hatred. It is the right expression of selfless service which has been the key note of Gandhi's ethics. Gita's ethics and philosophy

[1] *Young India*, Feb. 2, 1928.

[2] See *Gita, The Mother*, by M. K. Gandhi, edited by J. P. Chander p. 134.

depend, in the last analysis, on the worth of the human individual. To Gandhi, every individual is an embodiment of Divinity. "Each one of the teeming millions is an individual man or woman with a personality as sacred as his own...... To him, no man or woman is common or unclean. This is not merely a beautiful theory, that he preaches, it is his daily practice."[1]

[1] See *Mahatma Gandhi*, edited by S. Radhakrishnan, p. 45.

above all the worlds and bears in her eternal consciousness the Supreme Divine."[1]

The Divine Shakti assumes two forms, the transcedent Divine and the cosmic Divine. The cosmic Divine is concerned with the actual working of the world but the transcendent Divine is higher and greater. The cosmic Divine only carries out the will of the transcedent Divine that is really the spontaneous movement in anandam or bliss.

The cosmic Divine with the cosmic will leads us to the consideration of life. Does Aurobindo deny life? On the contrary, he develops his philosophy from an acceptance of life which is the expression of the dynamic Divine. Every form of life, every beat of life is delight. Even the very changes of life are forms of delight. If we view life as a whole, we find it to be rhythmical and harmonious. Ignorance reveals to us only a partial view of life. Aurobindo reiterates, life is ananda or bliss of completeness and creativeness. Death and suffering are not the final and real facts of life. They are due to temporary privation and inertia. Life is both calm and full. The more we understand life, the more we realise that death and suffering are temporary phases, illusions. Salvation lies not in forsaking life but in living it fully and divinising it. Indeed, to live life fully is to divinise it. Life is essentially spiritual and all cares must be taken to keep it in tune with its original nature. Under the pressure of the supramental the vital and the mental are to be transfigured.

[1] *The Mother*, by Sri Aurobindo, pp. 37-38.

To Sri Aurobindo there are no gaps between matter and life, mind and Supermind. In this connexion let us elucidate his idea of a spiritual evolution. For him, evolution is the manifestation of that which is phenomenally hidden. He speaks of different planes of existence. They are the material plane, vital plane, mental plane and supramental plane that act and react on one another. The higher planes press on the material and out of the latter, something new emerges. Life comes out of matter and mind out of life and so on. Sri Aurobindo speaks of the spiritual evolution thus: "If we regard the gradation of worlds or planes as a whole, we see them as a great connected complex movement; the higher precipitate their influences on the lower, the lower react to the higher and develop or manifest in themselves within their own formula something that corresponds to the superior power and its action. The material world has evolved life in obedience to a pressure from the vital plane, mind in obedience to a pressure from the mental plane. It is now trying to evolve Supermind in obedience to a pressure from the supramental plane."[1]

What is this Supermind? To get a clear idea of the Supermind is an impossible task for a non-Sadhaka. The experience of the Supermind is Aurobindo's singularly original contribution. The power of the Supermind is so great that it can overcome all limitations of humanity, passions of the vital, diseases, old age and even death of the physical body. An earthly immortality is the bold promise of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. Our evolution to a higher stage does not mean any sever-

[1] *The Riddle of this world*, p. 10.

ance from the body or mind. It means only a complete transformation of all of them. "Death is not an inherent characteristic of life, but is only a feature of it so far as it is subservient to the operation of Mind. Thus when life is freed from the operation of Mind, as it will be on the descent of the Supermind, it will not be any longer subject to death."[1]

The Supermind is the medium for the Divine descent. When the individual in course of upward progress achieves the Supermind, the Divine comes down and seizes every cell of the individual. In other words the individual is divinised and becomes free. Thus Aurobindo writes: "The Divine descends from pure existence through the play of Consciousness-Force and Bliss and the creative medium of Supermind into cosmic being ; we ascend from Matter through a developing life, soul and mind and the illuminating medium of Supermind towards the divine being. The knot of the two, the higher and the lower hemisphere is where mind and Supermind meet with a veil between them. The rending of the veil is the condition of the Divine life in humanity; for by that rending, by the illuminating descent of the higher into the nature of the lower being and the forceful ascent of the lower being into the nature of the higher, mind can recover its Divine light in the all-comprehending Supermind, the soul realise its Divine self in the all-possessing, all-blissful Ananda, life repossess its divine power in the play of omnipotent Conscious-Force and matter open to its

[1] See *An introduction to the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo*, by S. K Maitra, p. 8.

divine liberty as a form of the divine Existence."[1]

The Supermind is the link between the Divine and the world. Sri Aurobindo calls it the "Real-idea." "It is a power of Conscious Force expressive of real being, born out of real being, and partaking of its nature, and neither a child of the void nor a weaver of fictions. It is conscious Reality throwing itself into mutable forms of its own imperishable and immutable substance."[2] Again the Supermind is the culmination of mind. Mind has an urge to become the Supermind, but mind as such can never become the Supermind. Only in a transformed state can it become so. When the mind ascends upto the Supermind, it has to pass through such intermediate stages as higher mind, illumined mind, intuition and overmind.

We have said earlier that when the Supermind descends, the Divine seizes every centre of the individual consciousness. The individual becomes free, his vital, material and mental are all radically transformed. He then becomes a gnostic being and not a man. The gnostic being is the ideal of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. In *The Life Divine* he describes the nature of gnostic beings. The entire being of the gnostic being shall be governed by spirituality. "He would be universal but free in the universe, individual but not limited by a separate individuality." He shall have no "ego" and hence he would feel no difficulty in harmonizing himself with the world. He shall always work in a "universal awareness", have the "cosmic consciousness,

[1] *The Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 404.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 177.

sense and feeling." He would see, feel and hear the Divine in all forms and movements. He shall have no desires, no wants and nothing to win. Pain and suffering have been transformed for him. The Divine ananda shall transform everything in him into an expression of ananda. The Divine descent shall make him a superman.

All the gnostic beings shall not be of one type. "A supramental or gnostic race of beings would not be a race made according to a single type, moulded in a single fixed pattern; for the law of the Supermind is unity fulfilled in diversity, and therefore, there would be an infinite diversity in the manifestation of the gnostic consciousness, although that consciousness would still be one in its basis, in its constitution, in its all-revealing and all-uniting order."[1]

[1] *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, p. 1034.

EPILOGUE

An attempt has been made, in the foregoing pages, to present, briefly, the philosophies of some contemporary Indian thinkers. The best efforts of the Indian mind have always moved towards religion and philosophy. Indian contribution to world-culture is in its insistence on values that are spiritual. The Indian, it would seem, has been rarely content to be mental or secular. The thinkers of India tacitly assume the possibility of a higher knowledge; they are born theologians. It may be that to-day's mob has little appetite for such meat, but do not the tendencies of recent enquiry, even in the material and economic fields, seem to move towards a spiritual interpretation of life?

Contemporary India begins, as we have seen, with Raja Rammohun Roy. Standing at the cross-road of history he marks a new phase in our national existence. If now we seem in many respects taller than the Raja, it is mainly because he has raised us on his shoulders. Rammohun was a rationalist. In an age choked by creeds and dogmas he sowed the seeds of universal theism. This Devendranath nurtured with care and devotion, giving a name and local habitation to the Raja's ideas. Keshab, who worked with and under Devendranath for some years, was an eclectic and attempted a synthesis of religions, borrowing mainly from Christianity. They are the three apostles of Brahmoism and their story is now old far-off history,

INDEX